

The Uni-Verse of Translation

A Showcase of What is at Stake in the Translation of a Single Verse

Daniel Philipp Brändle

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gitte Buch-Hansen



Fordypningsoppgave i teologi,
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Daniel Philipp Brändle

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Abstract

This essay aims at the heart of biblical scholarship: *translation*. Its objective is to answer the question: “What is at stake when a single biblical verse is translated?” In doing so, the very premises of translation are analyzed in detail. The conclusions of this analysis will serve as the basis for a case study: the translation of a single biblical verse.

Two factors motivate this work: The first factor aims at an ecclesiastical realm, seeking to prevent misuse of biblical texts on the basis of claiming ‘the one right translation’, through practically showing the dynamics within biblical texts and their translation. The second factor aims at the field of biblical studies: the significance of the translation process seems to be underestimated, leading to a situation where many of the preliminary conditions are kept in the dark. Through the critical examination of this fundamental part of biblical scholarship, an effort is made to revitalize the scholarly debate concerning the very core of translation.

The essay starts by considering the challenges of biblical translation in general, where historical conceptualization of *the translator’s role* will be examined. Here, the importance of *decisions* in the translator’s work emerges as an important theme. A consideration of *textual criticism*, preparing the source texts for translations, shows that also decisions made by text critics must be analyzed in the same way as the translator’s decisions. Through a consideration of the development within textual criticism and its objectives, the *hermeneutical significance* of *biblical manuscripts* will be addressed. Especially one approach, addressing the self-definition of textual criticism through an analysis of the role that text *variants* play, will be examined thoroughly.

An examination of *historical conceptualizations of translation* will provide the tools and language to construct an understanding of translation that addresses and solves many of the previous uncovered issues. The sentence ‘*everything is target culture*’ is descriptive for the approach that is being developed here. This approach will be the basis for a final *case study*: A detailed translation opens up for a critical examination of the previous won insights. This last chapter shows that by translating a single verse – and by seriously engaging with questions about the translation process along the way – not only the entire understanding and construction of the source text (and everything connected to it) is put at stake, but also the fundamental understanding and construction of the concept of translation.

Preface

Roadmap – how did we get here?

This essay is the result of a somewhat longer journey. The original idea was to work with Paul and Stoicism. Together with my supervisors, Prof. Dr. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow and Prof. Dr. Gitte Buch-Hansen (associate professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen), I started working with Romans 3:14-18. The question was how *ethnos* (nation/people), which seemingly was based on something else than physical descent, has to be imagined, and whether the study of Stoicism could contribute to a better understanding of it. I started by translating the mentioned pericope, realizing that the first verse in itself contained so many aspects that were crucial for how the rest of the pericope would be understood that I had to go deeper into this question. At a joint seminar where all master-students presented their work, I decided to present my work on Romans 4:13, explaining what was at stake in the translation of this single verse. The feedback was very positive and it became clear that there was a need for such a work. Thus, after having discussed the issue with my supervisors, I decided to change the angle of the essay towards translation and the hermeneutics involved. During the basic research I understood that there were some very fundamental questions that needed to be addressed. In order to get new perspectives on a core-activity within New Testament studies, I reached out to a non-traditional discipline for biblical scholarship to interact with: Translation Studies. This essay's first chapter will elaborate in more detail how the input from studying the various branches and approaches to translation within Translation Studies led to this essay's basic hypothesis. Thus, before we can start working, there are two more things that need to be addressed.

Why in English?

You might ask why a German citizen, living and studying in Norway, would write such an essay in English. The main reason for writing this essay in English is that I have been taught how to write academic texts in Norwegian for the past five years, which has led to a kind of automatism in formulating arguments. Such a practice can lead to a situation, in which one does not critically reflect on the real meaning of the words one uses anymore. In order to prevent hiding good arguments behind clever rhetorical formulations, I decided to write in a language that forced me to think through each and every formulation.

The second reason has to do with the age of globalization, English being a *lingua franca*, and the nature of its core-interest. The very subject of this essay – translation – is a matter that is not confined to a Norwegian context, but an issue that needs to be discussed again globally and thus locally. Since the vast majority of scholarly work this essay relies upon is written in English, it was natural to choose the same language here.

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First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors Prof. Dr. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow and Prof. Dr. Gitte Buch-Hansen for their merciful patience with me during all the turns this project has taken. I am deeply grateful for being assigned to these two extraordinary scholars that have influenced and inspired me profoundly throughout the last four years. I would also like to thank Prof. emeritus Halvor Moxnes, to whom I owe the fascination for Paul, and who has dedicated so much time and passion to teach students of Paul and the New Testament. Also, Vemund Blomkvist deserves a huge thanksgiving for passionately making the study of the Greek New Testament so interesting and living. Furthermore, I would like to wholeheartedly thank both scientific and administrative employees at the Faculty of Theology for the hard work and dedication they put down for every student, to help us realize our full potential.

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Mein herzlichster Dank gilt meinen Eltern, Ralf und Marie-Luise Brändle, die mich in Allen meinen Wahlen stets unterstützt haben – auch dann, als ich mich dazu entschlossen habe mehrere tausend Kilometer entfernt das Studium der Theologie zu verfolgen.

My last, but most important thanksgiving is dedicated to Oda Helene Evjen, my compassionate, loving, and supporting partner, source of joy and laughter.

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1 About This Essay: What to Expect

This essay concerns the very core of biblical scholarship. It seeks to challenge one of the cornerstones in New Testament research: *translation*.

Although it is one of the most essential parts of biblical scholarship, we¹ will see in the cause of this essay that the need for a renewed debate about the fundamental conceptualization² of translation emerges unavoidably. In a more and more fractured and nuanced world, biblical scholarship must once more turn its focus critically towards its own paradigms and reach out to other disciplines in order to get new perspectives on our own field of study. At the same time, applying approaches from other disciplines on biblical scholarship may enable these other disciplines to gain meta-reflections on how their own theories and approaches function within a non-native environment.

This is what we will attempt to do in this essay – within reasonable limits. We will try to take a critical look at translation and some of the central questions tied to it, such as the question about the translator's role and agency in preparing a translation. In these considerations we will try to incorporate approaches and perspectives from the field of Translation Studies in an effort to revitalize the discussion of the conceptualization of translation within biblical scholarship.

This essay's focus arose from the short but fundamental question: "What is at stake when just a single verse from the Bible is translated?" In trying to answer it, other questions arose that concerned the very core of translation. These arising questions could not be left unaddressed, if I really wanted to know what is at stake when a single biblical verse is translated. So I realized that I had to address the many decisions and choices the translator makes, before and while he or she translates. Further I realized the necessity of thoroughly analyzing the hermeneutical implications involved in the decision process. This meant that the investigation had to go all the way to the core – namely the fundamental conceptualization of translation. In working the way from this fundamental point back to the starting point, the concern of

¹ In the cause of this essay, shifts will occur between "we" and "I". "I" is used to clearly mark decisions or choices made by me, while the inclusive "we" is used otherwise.

² The term "conceptualization" could be defined as "The action or process of forming a concept or idea of something" (Conceptualization, 2015). In this essay, the use of the term "conceptualization" shall not only point to the process of forming a concept, but also include its result (the concept).

what is at stake in the translation of a single verse, it was possible to engage and address some of the silent core-issues of translation within biblical scholarship. The very structure of this essay reflects the above-described process:

The following chapter seeks to explain two of the governing motives behind this work and why it is so important. Chapter 3 starts by considering the general challenges of biblical translation, realizing that the author's role in the process of translation needs to be addressed. Here, we are introduced to the field of Translation Studies, which can help us in rethinking our conceptualization of the translator's role and agency.

After this, we will examine the decisions that even precede our own encounter with the manuscripts that serve as the basis for translation: we will attempt to understand the decisions made by textual critics in order to see how their choices might impact our translation. In chapter 3.3, we then try to establish a solid theoretical basis from which we will be able to execute the translation in a later chapter. Here the basic concept of translation will be explored, before we can consider historical approaches in an effort to find a fitting one for our purpose.

In the final chapter (4), all of the new insights will be brought together in the translation of Romans 4:13 that serves as a case study, seeking to finally answer the question this whole investigation started with: "What is at stake if a single biblical verse is translated?"

Already now we have *one* answer to this question: The translation of a single biblical verse, if treated seriously, puts our entire understanding and conceptualization of translation at stake.

2 Why This Essay?

As mentioned above, the initiating question for this essay was: “What is at stake if a single biblical verse is translated?” Behind this question lay driving motives on the part of the author, two of which must be spelled out explicitly in order to give the reader the possibility to fully understand the way in which the study is angled, why it is conducted at all, and to understand the concrete questions it poses. Those motives are thus what we could call two of the basic choices I have made, shaping the essay and its outcome due to the way in which the questions are asked and the study is conducted. At the same time, these two motives are the dual application of the results I hope this study will find and convince its reader of.

The first reason for conducting such a study is a political and/ or ideological one, addressing a broader societal and ecclesiastical realm. I seek, on the basis of a scientific approach, to prevent misuse and abuse of biblical texts as legitimatization of patriarchal structures, uneven distribution of power, and suppression of minorities, by practically demonstrating the great complexity and richness of biblical manuscripts and their translation into modern languages. In other words, I hope that by showing the dynamics in the translation process, as well as the dynamics within the texts themselves, which for a great number of people still are normative and imperative guidelines for the way in which they conduct their lives, it will become harder for individuals or institutions to make claims for the one “right” and authoritative translation or “what the Bible really says”. By showing and exemplifying the complex dynamics of translating Greek manuscripts, including the consideration of their origin, diversity and richness of this tradition, I would like to raise awareness among the various users of these texts – expert and ordinary readers – because the awareness of the complexity and richness, in my opinion, necessarily leads to a deeper understanding and thus a deeper respect and humility in the *usage* of these texts. Thus, this project’s objective can be said to be somewhat antithetic compared to *Liturgiam Authenticam* (Vatican, 2001 a)³, a set of rules put forth by the ‘Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments’ of the Roman Catholic Church, which verbalizes more than fifteen “general principles applicable to all translation” (No. 19-45), seemingly in an effort to rectify and thus control the process and

³ *Liturgiam Authenticam* can be found here:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_liturgiam-authenticam_en.html

outcome of translations⁴. Whereas this document or approach to translation must be regarded as laying “the foundation for Vatican micromanagement of almost every aspect of liturgical texts” (Jensen, 2001), which of course includes biblical texts, the approach taken in our essay will show that the very premises for projects such as *Liturgiam Authenticam* are doubtful in terms of hermeneutical reflection.

The second motive for dealing with the risk of translation aims at the academic field of biblical studies, and especially at the New Testament studies. The translation of biblical manuscripts is the very core, the starting point, and the most basic area of New Testament studies. I have the impression that very often when New Testament texts are examined through many different perspectives by students and teachers, the act of translation and all the considerations which are integrated into this work – read “hermeneutics” – are not paid due attention. In short: the significance of the translation process is underestimated and thus many of the preliminary and interpretation-preceding conditions are kept in the dark. I hope that by showing how much of our translation already predetermines our understanding of the text and its universe, and the degree to which our subconscious preconceptions of the text and its universe predetermines the ways in which we translate, hermeneutical awareness of the importance of conscious translation can be emphasized again. Further, I hope that the hermeneutical reflections that will be given in the cause of this essay will lead the reader into a critical examination of his or her own pre-interpretational conditions and his or her own role in the process of translation or reading. Only when this awareness is present, will we be able to deliver translations (and thus interpretations) of biblical (and other) texts that not only articulate the best possible replacement of a Koine Greek word with an English one, but instead will enable us to consciously craft a new text for the basis of interpretation, that in the best way possible reflects “the original” text. But let this be clear: The objective is not to bring forth or create a new and more accurate way of translating – this I consider to be impossible. The objective is rather to raise the awareness among translators and translation-

⁴ The press release summarizing the content of *Liturgiam Authenticam* states e.g. that “[t]ranslations should try not to extend or to restrict the meaning of the original terms, and terms that recall publicity slogans or those that have political, ideological or similar overtones should be avoided. Academic and secular style-books on vernacular composition should not be used uncritically, since the Church has distinctive things to say and a style of expression that is appropriate to them.” (Vatican, 2001 b). The entire press release can be found here:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_comunicato-stampa_en.html

users, so that he or she can be conscious about, and aware of, the many choices that are taken before and during the act of translation. This is a condition in order for the translator and interpreter to communicate these preconditions to the reader. Thus, this is an essay that looks at the very starting point of New Testament studies, while at the same time hoping to extract meta-perspectives on the entire field from this research.

3 On the Premises of Translation

3.1 The Challenges of Biblical Translation

3.1.1 The Bible – Both Contributor to and Part of Western Culture

There are several aspects to the translation of biblical texts that make them more complex than the translation of other ancient texts. Just a small fraction of these challenges are technical difficulties. Mainly those difficulties could be traced back to both the special character of biblical texts and the formative role they have played in the development of western culture and philosophy (“Weltanschauung”). Bart D. Ehrman captures this dual role of biblical texts precisely: “...the New Testament has always been much more than a book for Christian believers. It is also an important cultural artifact, a collection of writings that stands at the foundation of much of our Western civilization and heritage” (Ehrman, 2011, 13). Thus, the Bible and its texts are not only part of the cultural canon of the Western world, but they also are an inspiration to it (Løland, Martinsen & Skippervold, 2014, 8).

There are virtually no other texts, originating from the same geographical location and time period as the biblical texts that have been edited, (mis-) used, copied, redistributed, read, understood, interpreted, placed in new contexts, and given new life to than New Testament texts. Not only are they witnesses of a certain literary type, deriving from a certain era and from a certain geographical area; they have been – and still are – normative texts for their readers, hearers, interpreters, and followers, even if they may have changed in character through different ways of usage throughout the centuries. Still today, New Testament texts are read as straightforward theological-juridical texts – even if this is to be regarded as a type of use only applying to a minority of groups building their philosophy upon those texts. But even without regard to this type of use, New Testament texts are still fundamentally important for the creation and maintenance of life-philosophies, beliefs, and faiths of an

immense number of people⁵. It is first and foremost this existential dimension of New Testament texts, by which they also shape the culture we live in, that makes the work with them so delicate compared to working with translation of other ancient texts such as Homer. Even if Homer also belongs to what Løland, Martinsen and Skippervold (2014, 8) call “Vestens kulturelle kanon” – ‘the cultural Canon of the West’, the Bible’s extensive and more existential grounded influence is displayed in several different ways in the Western World: In most western countries, national holydays point back to biblical stories and events, such as Easter and Christmas; In Bavaria, Germany, the law on upbringing and education (“Erziehungs- und Unterrichtsgesetz”) states: “Due to Bavaria’s historical and cultural imprint, a cross is installed in each class-room. In this way, the will to realize the highest constitutional education-goals, on the basis of Christian and occidental values, and under the observance of the freedom of faith, is expressed”⁶; In the UK, a proposal to terminate the practice of swearing oaths on the Bible in courts was rejected by magistrates because “it strengthens the value of witnesses' evidence”⁷ (Pigott, 2013). These are just a few examples

⁵ It has to be mentioned that New Testament texts have a much broader socio-cultural appeal than just in a religious realm. Especially the Western culture and popular culture draws on, and is marked by, clear references to biblical material (for different pop-cultural examples, see “Bibelen i populærkulturen” (2014) by Løland, Martinsen and Skippervold). This can mainly be traced back to the fact that the western culture has developed interdependently with Christianity throughout the ages. However, the main point here is to underline that the biblical texts are not exclusively object to religious examination and use: they also serve as cultural (even secular-cultural?) texts and are thus “owned” by a even broader mass than it is possible to focus on in the continuation.

⁶ My own translation of the German law-text, which reads as follows: “Angesichts der geschichtlichen und kulturellen Prägung Bayerns wird in jedem Klassenraum ein Kreuz angebracht. Damit kommt der Wille zum Ausdruck, die obersten Bildungsziele der Verfassung auf der Grundlage christlicher und abendländischer Werte unter Wahrung der Glaubensfreiheit zu verwirklichen.” (Bayrische Staatsregierung, 2000). The entire law can be found here: <http://www.gesetze-bayern.de/jportal/portal/page/bsbayprod.psml?showdoccase=1&st=null&doc.id=jlr-EUGBY2000rahmen&doc.part=X&doc.origin=bs>.

⁷ “For centuries, magistrates have dispensed justice in England and Wales, and relied on the Bible to force people to tell them the truth. Its moral force was unquestioned, placing intense pressure on witnesses to tell the truth. The oath, still sworn by witnesses and defendants as they hold a holy book, has given the English language one of its most familiar sentences. “I swear by Almighty God [to tell] the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”” (Pigott, 2013). The entire article can be found here: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-24588854>.

of how and in which way the Bible has influenced and still influences our culture considerably in a more existential way than e.g. Homer does or ever could.

3.1.2 The Impact of Biblical Translation on an Individual Level

If the focus is moved from the previous institutional level to the individual level, we understand that translating biblical texts is even more delicate here, because whenever one works with matters that potentially trigger or release emotions due to their existential meaning to a group of people, this task has to be conducted with the uttermost wariness and respect.

There are numerous national and international examples that show how the translation of a single word from the Bible can spark controversy or even trigger conflict, because the new translations often don't correspond with believer's traditional images and ideas and thus may be seen as doctrinal threats. By way of example, the question of whether to translate *ha'alimah* in Isaiah 7:14 as "young woman" or "virgin" has generated such an amount of controversy in different countries, that the question is picked up by and debated in national media. In both the US (Silver, 2011) and in Norway (Meland, 2010), it is the translation's implication on traditional dogma – and thus the effect on concrete parts of people's construction of their religious worldview – that is at the core of concern. This example shows just how fundamental the impact of translating can be. For the translator this means that he or she has to be aware of yet another dimension in his or her work.

3.1.3 The Translator's Role in the Process of Translation⁸

Becoming aware of translations' existential implications is one possible way in which the translator is led to reflect upon this additional hermeneutical layer (on top of other hermeneutical reflections), which demands us as translators to be aware of *our own attitude, role, and position* towards these texts. Historically, the role of the translator in the process of translation has not been discussed or debated as an important part of translation, due to the – understandable – emphasis that has been put on the *product* or the *outcome* of the translators' work. This becomes especially understandable if we consider that “[i]n the West it was the translation of the classics and of the Bible which provided the bulk of input to nascent translation theory for two thousand years” (Munday, 2010, 420). As a matter of fact, translation was fundamentally important to the spread of Christianity beyond the borders of Palestine (Naudé, 2010, 288).

Yet, this also meant that the main questions that were being focused on were “questions of accuracy and the relation between source and target texts” (Munday, 2010, 420) – the translator's role as the active and operating agent, creating a target text (TT) on the basis of a source text (ST), was overshadowed by the focus on the product. Thus, the translator's role has traditionally been in the background due to the way in which societies have thought about

⁸ The following section and the subsequent chapters will utilize a number of perspectives from the field of Translation Studies, as they are presented in the first volume of *Handbook of Translation Studies* (hereafter “HTS”). Although the HTS is an encyclopedic work, containing about 75 topical articles with up to 6000 words each, and although they – due to their length – cannot possibly contain all nuances found in the specific section within Translation Studies they discuss (Gambier and Doorslaer, 2010, 1-2), the articles found in HTS give us the tools and not least a terminology to reflect on the multiple common grounds and interests shared by biblical scholarship and the field of Translation Studies. Thus, this essay will not exclusively draw on a single field within Translation Studies (such as e.g. “Ethics and translation” (van Wyke, 2010, 111-115), “Sociology of translation” (Wolf, 2010, 337-343), or “Political Translation” (Gagnon, 2010, 252-256)) and make up its theoretical ramification solely on this basis. Rather, the objective is to *combine* the multiple perspectives and impulses given by Translation Studies and view the work that is done within biblical scholarship in the new light shed on it by these approaches. The goal is thus to practically show that biblical scholarship should reach out to, and make use of, the numerous resources provided by the field of Translation Studies. This interdisciplinary approach is intended to primarily help biblical scholarship to reflect on its own practices and theoretical foundations, but it also has the potential of constructively criticizing, and thus help to develop, the field of Translation Studies. Since this essay has a concrete hypothesis that it tries to discuss, the extent to which we are able to discuss the various Translation Studies-approaches in depth is limited through practical causes.

and conceptualized translation. In her essay on “Philosophy and translation”, Rosemary Arrojo (2010, 247-251) traces this general idea of “translation as ‘the transportation of meaning or of a truth from one language to another’” all the way back to Cicero, and connects it to the concepts found in Platonism, which themselves have been fundamental components in the development of Western philosophy. Arrojo states:

This widespread conception of translation is perfectly compatible with one of the foundational assumptions of Western metaphysics and the Judeo-Christian tradition, i.e., the belief that form and content (or language and thought, signifier and signified, word and meaning in similar oppositions) are not only separable but even independent from one another (Arrojo, 2010, 247).

This way of thinking implies that the actual meaning of a word, the truth it expresses, can be reproduced in any arbitrary language and in any contexts in a more or less mechanical a neutral manner. Of course, this does not allow any space for the translator having an active role in translation. Additionally, it also serves as the theoretical basis in an effort to “clearly oppose translators to authors, and translations to originals” (Arrojo, 2010, 248). If we consider biblical translation from a historical perspective, it is understandable that these divisions were desirable goals from a religious point of view.

Nevertheless, there are historical examples that indicate the existence of awareness of the fact that it matters *who* translates biblical texts: one of the examples Roy E. Ciampa (2011, 139) points to in his essay on the role ideology plays in biblical translation, is how William Tyndale, translator of the English Bible, was attacked as a heretic due to the way in which he chose to translate “church” (“congregation”), “priest” (“senior/ elder”), and “charity” (“love”). Although there are such examples, we perhaps must consider those first and foremost as an expression and an attempt to safeguard the above mentioned platonic tradition, rather than interpreting it as an example of the conscious and reflected awareness of the translator’s agency in the process of translation: it was not necessarily Tyndale’s agency in the process of translation that made him a heretic. It was presumably more the fact that he (knowingly) gave what was perceived as the “wrong” translation of concrete words with one concrete meaning.

Also modern day examples, in which translators are accused of projecting their own agendas or political views on the biblical texts, must be understood on the background of the idea that there *are* neutral and entirely correct translations. It is therefore not surprising that when some of the more recent Bible translations incorporated gender-inclusive language, critics accused them of “deliberately altering”⁹ the word of God (Schmidt, 2002), reflecting again the opinion that the translator should be the neutral tool by which a source text is reproduced exactly in another language. This shows that the platonic conceptualization of translation still is a governing principle – not just among common users of the Bible, but also among people working with translation themselves.

For this essay, and for our entire context, this means that everybody within the field of biblical studies, especially anyone working with biblical translation, must critically reflect on and ask him or herself whether this traditional platonic idea of translation still is present – conscious or unconscious – in our work. Another question that unavoidably arises in the cause of this is whether this concept still is a way of protecting ones own religious feelings. Although these questions must be addressed and discussed in the field of biblical scholarship, it is just as important to make the users of e.g. English, Norwegian, or German Bibles aware of the role the translator plays in providing what they call “the Bible”. The same principle also applies to the question in which way we conceptualize translation, which is intertwined with the question of the translator’s role.

These considerations have led us into some of the core concerns that constitute the center of the investigations conducted in this essay. Within Translation Studies, questions about the translator’s role and the philosophical basis for the conceptualization of translation have been taken up and openly debated. We thus have to ask whether biblical scholarship will be able to integrate this discourse in a meaningful and fruitful manner into its own field of study, and thus let itself be constructively challenged by the various branches of Translation Studies.

⁹ “Deliberately altering” is my own translation of “vorsätzlich zu verändern”, which is part of a statement made by Randy Stinson, quoted by Schmidt (2002) in her article “*Brüder und Schwestern*” – *Streit um eine neue Bibel-Übersetzung*. The entire quote reads: “„Wir glauben, dass die Bibel das Wort Gottes ist. Es ist gefährlich, diese Dinge vorsätzlich zu verändern“.

3.1.4 The Translator's Role Within the Field of Translation Studies¹⁰

As we have seen above, when the translation of holy texts is discussed, the role of the translator has historically been toned down. As a possible reason for this, we followed Rosemary Arrojo's argument. She pointed to the way in which the Platonic philosophy's conceptualization of reality has been applied to translation and was furthermore able to showed how this idea can and has been the cause of difficulties when the role of the translator has been discussed.

If we broaden our view and study the role of the translator in the field of translation in general, we are able to register parallels and many of the same tendencies in the historical development of translation as we did in the section above on religious/ Christian translation. Yet, what distinguishes the field of Translation Studies from the field of biblical translation is the fact that, according to Munday (2010,425), it is possible to detect a concrete and growing focus on the role, work, and agency of the translator in Translation Studies. Munday (2010, 425) further states that "[t]his [increasing interest in the role of the translator] has manifested itself in the concern for translator ethics and identity and in a strong trend towards translation sociology".

While the latter will be mentioned later, we will have a look at the former: Ben van Wyke's essay on "Ethics and translation" (2010, 111-115) gives a short but striking explanation of the overall development regarding the role of the translator, while at the same time showing how the old perception of the translator's (ideally non-existing) role still constitutes the backbone of institutions that are dealing with the ethics of translation today.

Van Wyke begins by drawing a continuing line from the way in which Philo Judaeus pictured the translator's role in 20 BCE, all the way to 1955 and Vladimir Nabokov's conception of the translator's role, quoting the latter as follows: "the translator 'has only one duty to perform, and this is to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text, and nothing but the text'" (van Wyke, 2010, 111). A problem, which for van Wyke naturally follows from such a

¹⁰ The following section's intent is to show how the translator's role has become an object of attention within Translation Studies in general. Chapter 3.3. "How do I translate" will provide the ramifications to discuss and highlight translation models and theories – including questions concerning the translator's decisions – in a more detailed fashion.

original or source text centered thinking, is the fact that the ethics of translation only have been discussed “as fidelity towards the original and its author” (Ibid.). This becomes evident through three examples of Translators Associations¹¹ that demand the translator’s absolute faithfulness towards the original or source text. The most serious example is a quote from a draft for the so-called “Code of Professional Practice”, prepared by the *Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs*. The statement, as quoted by van Wyke reads: “[t]ranslators and interpreters shall carry out their work with complete impartiality and not express any personal or political opinions in the course of the work” (van Wyke, 2010, 112)¹². From a hermeneutical point of view, and with the explanations of Rosemary Arrojo in mind, the translator’s invisibility and neutrality (objectivity) is a questionable desire. The conclusions that Rosemary Arrojo and Ben van Wyke draw from their respective investigations are strikingly similar. Arrojo (2010, 250) states:

The acceptance of the insight according to which translators cannot avoid making decisions and are, thus, necessarily visible in their rewriting of the foreign within the limits and the constraints of the domestic has allowed Translation Studies to move beyond the usual stalemates that for at least two thousand years have underestimated the translator’s authorial role in the writing of translated texts.

In an even more direct way, addressing the translator directly, van Wyke (2010, 113) writes:

If translators embrace the fantasy that they can be completely objective and invisible, then they will not critically look at the role they are actually playing. By acknowledging their visibility, translators can begin to more responsibly and realistically reflect upon the relationships between languages, between the original and translation, or the source and target cultures and examine the role their work plays in cultural mediation.

¹¹ Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta (ATIA), American Translator Association (ATA), and *Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs* (FIT).

¹² The European Branch of the International Federation of Translators adopted on the 11th September 2009 the “Code of Professional Practice” (FIT Europe, 2009), with only one modification compared to the quote van Wyke presents: under point 1.3 “Impartiality”, the expression “or political” was removed (Code of Professional Practice, 2009). Still, this adopted Code of Professional Practice articulates the ideal and the vision of the invisible and neutral translator.

Besides from Arrojo and van Wyke's approaches, there are several other branches within the field of Translation Studies that each under its own perspective tries to describe the role of the translator. Even the very empirically oriented approach of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) (see Rosa, 2010, 95-104) tries to theorize and describe the activity of the translator, clearly assuming and building on the premise of the translator's active and visible role in translation. We will come back to the concrete theories of translation that also explicitly describe the translator's role in chapter 3.1.4. "How Do I Translate?".

What is important for now is that we have been able to establish an understanding of the translator's role historically, which still has implications for the conceptualization of the translator's role today. Furthermore, we have seen that the ideal of the translator's neutrality towards the message of the text he or she translates, leads to a chain of challenges that have been addressed by different branches of Translation Studies. Thus, based on Arrojo and van Wyke's accounts, we can say that we as readers, interpreters, listeners, and translators never will be able to conduct our work neutrally towards the source. Source texts will *always* be understood and read in effect of whom we are, where we come from and what background we have. Since we cannot free ourselves from our bodies and experiences when translating a text, maybe the striving for neutrality should not be a translational objective *per se*. What if we emphasize less the importance and significance of neutrality, and rather consciously highlight our own standpoint and origin as a hermeneutical necessity in order to show 'what goes into our translations'? This would also mean that we have to be aware of our cultural background and origin; which again makes the matter even more complex, since New Testament texts also have imprinted and shaped the cultural reality of our West-European realm.

Naturally the question arises whether we at all have the capacity of following all of these lines and unravel them into a system and order that is possible to handle. And further we have to ask ourselves whether we have to conduct all these self-focused investigations each time we translate a text. In some of the examples given above, the answer certainly has to be "yes"; for example when we work with religious texts, we have to be aware of our own relationship to the text and how we evaluate its value and importance. We can further state that the translator has to be aware of the immense hermeneutical complexity connected to his or her own background when working with texts, and especially New Testament texts. These actualities are things the translator brings to the table him or herself.

Since we now are starting to become more aware of many of the factors that play into our work as translators, we will have to accurately consider and explore them in more detail in the following chapters. We will attempt to do so, trying to spell out and critically think through all the decisions, preconditions, theories, and positions that go into the translation of a single verse. In order to do so, we will have to start the inquiry even before the translator comes into the picture, namely with the decisions that are made in preparation of the biblical manuscripts, which then serve as the starting point for the translator.

3.2 Pre-translational Choices and Their Impact

3.2.1 Prelude to Decisions: Choices Made by us and Choices Made by Others

Even before just a single word is translated, many decisions that will influence the final product have been made. These are choices and decisions the translator has made – conscious or subconscious, and which have enormous consequences for the outcome of the following translation. They concern e.g. the translator's ambition and intent for the translation, the translation strategies that the work is based on, the translator's preconception of the entire source text including everything connected to it, the translator's conception of his or her own agency in the translation process, etc.

Yet, even preceding these decisions made by the translator, there is another set of decisions and choices made that will influence the translation. It is the scholars that prepare the manuscripts, which our translations are based on, that make these decisions for us. Thus, we have to become aware of the fact that some of the decisions that go into a translation, are beyond the scope of our primary influence. So in order for us to fully understand as many of the factors and processes that determine the final product of our translation, we also have to examine how the manuscripts we use are prepared. We have to understand the processes and the criteria that determine which of the variants and readings will be included in the final manuscript – and which will be rejected. This is necessary, since neither the scholars that

establish the criteria for the variant election, nor the scholars that later decide between variant readings on the basis of these criteria, operate in a hermeneutical vacuum. Thus, by taking our earlier hermeneutical reflections serious, we have to analyze these scholars' agency in the preparation of our manuscripts in the same way as we did in analyzing the role of the translator. As we will see, this awareness necessarily leads to posing some of the same questions to their work as we have posed towards the translators' agency. This section's intent is to start the inquiry at the very beginning by taking a look at the manuscripts and their hermeneutical importance.

3.2.2 The Manuscripts of the New Testament and Their Hermeneutical Importance

The Text of the New Testament and Textual Criticism

For this essay, I have chosen to translate a single verse from the Bible's New Testament, and more accurately, verse 13 in chapter four of Paul's letter to the Romans. Nestle-Aland's 27th Edition of the New Testament in Greek (*Novum Testamentum Graece*)¹³ served as my source text¹⁴. This is important to highlight, since the manuscript for the Greek New Testament is the result of the scholarly consideration of many different manuscripts and variants. The challenge lays in the fact that we do not have access to what traditional textual criticism has called the 'original manuscripts' for the books that make up our modern New Testament (Metzger, 1971, xiii). These 'originals' are also referred to as 'autographs' (Greenlee, 1995,

¹³ The electronic version (version 4.3) of the text is taken from the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland manuscript (prepared by Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung Münster/Westfalen, Barbara and Kurt Aland (editors). Copyright © 1993 by Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.), as presented by Accordance Bible Software (version 10.4.5). There are several reasons for the use of the 27th edition, and not the newest 28th edition: The most important one is that the most substantial secondary literature used in this essay works in the context of the older 27th edition, and not the 28th that was published in 2012. Furthermore, there are made no changes in the concrete verse we are going to translate.

¹⁴ Even if Bruce M. Metzger's book "*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*" (1971), which will be used and referred to in this chapter, is intended to accompany the Greek New Testament as prepared by the United Bible Societies, it also applies to the base text given by Nestle-Aland since they are identical.

24). What we do have, are approximately 5700¹⁵ different Greek manuscripts (Ehrman, 2011, 20) originating from quite diverging time-periods and a variety of geographical locations¹⁶. Furthermore, even copies of the same texts do not accord with each other, so that we do not have two completely identical texts among these about 5700 manuscripts (Metzger, 1971, xxiv and Ehrman, 2011, 20). Therefore, the challenge for modern editors is to neatly consider the many known versions and variants and decide which variant is to be included into the text and which variants are – if not rejected – put into the apparatus.

The method scholars utilize in this process is called “textual criticism”. This method gives scholars a set of criteria, which should help them to decide which reading or variant is the best one¹⁷. Ehrman (2011, 26-27) gives a selection of these criteria that basically follow the “outline of basic criteria and considerations to be taken into account in evaluating variant readings” described by Metzger (1992, 209-211)¹⁸. Since Ehrman’s presentation is linguistically and structurally easier to work with, his presentation will serve as the model for the brief description of criteria in the following.

The first criteria both authors mention, is the manuscript’s age: the older a manuscript is, the greater is the probability that it reflects the ‘original’ reading, since the oldest copy is most likely closer to the ‘original’ in terms of copies it is based on than a younger copy. The basic

¹⁵ An interesting development can be observed when going through some of the works on New Testament textual criticism that are used here: The earlier works, such as Greenlee (1995) and Metzger (1971 and 1992) estimate the number of Greek New Testament manuscripts to around 5000, with the exception of Epp and Fee (1993) that refer to exactly 5338 manuscripts (Epp and Fee, 1993, 3). In 2007, Epp refers to “nearly 5,500 Greek manuscripts” (Epp, 2007, 275), while yet some years later in 2011, Ehrman speaks of “something like 5,700 manuscripts of the New Testament” (Ehrman, 2011, 20). This shows that still New Testament manuscripts are discovered so that the number still rises. This tendency contributes to the enrichment of our picture of the New Testament textual tradition and suggests that the preparation of new Greek New Testaments will be a continuing task for scholars.

¹⁶ For an extensive list and description of the most important manuscripts, see chapter II “Important Witnesses to the Text of the New Testament” p. 36-92 in *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration. Third, Enlarged Edition* (Metzger, 1992).

¹⁷ In the following, we are mainly interested in the variants themselves. The transmission of manuscripts in general cannot be focused on separately, due to the practical limitations of this essay.

¹⁸ A virtual identical “Outline of Criteria” can be found in Metzger’s “*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*” (1971, xxv-xxviii).

thought behind this is that with each new copy the amount, or at least the possibility, of alterations increases. Another factor helping textual critics to determine which reading to include is the spreading of a certain variant: the variant that is supported by manuscripts from different geographical areas is normally chosen over the variant that is found only in one locality. These are examples of what textual criticism calls “external evidence” (Metzger, 1992, 208). Yet, also “internal evidence” (Ibid.) is utilized to determine preferable readings: In the case of multiple variants for a section of the text, textual critics will in most cases prefer the variant that is consistent with the authors general style, comparing e.g. the terminology used and the language skills displayed. Furthermore, textual scholars would include difficult passages, containing elements like historical misinformation or faulty grammar, rather than the easier readings because it is thought that scribes and other copyists of these texts, might have smoothed out such difficulties.

Kurt and Barbara Aland’s list of “Twelve Basic Rules for Textual Criticism” (Aland and Aland, 1987, 275-277) operate on a meta-level, compared to the criteria Ehrman and Metzger focused on. They establish rules that try to negotiate the priority or primacy of external evidence (such as age and geographical distribution) over internal evidence (the authors style, theological coherency, and so on). This is exemplified by the rules three and four:

3. Criticism of the text must always begin from the evidence of the manuscript tradition and only afterward turn to a consideration of internal criteria.
4. Internal criteria (the context of the passage, its style and vocabulary, the theological environment of the author, etc.) can never be the sole basis for a critical decision, especially when they stand in opposition to the external evidence” (Aland and Aland, 1987, 275).

They furthermore argue strongly for a non-mechanical application of the principles, which means that the textual scholar has to consider e.g. an easy or smoother reading over a difficult one, because there is no automatism in the general criteria (Ibid., 276).

But even with this system that helps textual scholars in their work of reconstructing the ‘original’ texts, one has to have a basic understanding of how such a seemingly holy text can possibly become corrupt. Metzger shortly but concisely describes some of the major reasons that play a key role in explaining the existence of many different manuscripts and why they are both inconsistent and sometimes conflicting when compared to each other:

In the earliest days of the Christian church, after an apostolic letter was sent to a congregation or an individual, or after a gospel was written to meet the needs of a particular reading public, copies would be made in order to extend its influence and to enable others to profit from it as well. It was inevitable that such handwritten copies would contain a greater or lesser number of differences in wording from the original. Most of the divergencies arose from quite accidental causes, such as mistaking a letter or a word for another that looked like it.¹⁹ (Metzger, 1971, xv)

Yet, also intended alterations in wording can be traced: copyists could change or substitute words and sentences in order to “smooth out grammatical or stylistic harshness, or to eliminate real or imagined obscurities of meaning in the text” (Ibid., xvi). These intended alterations are then highly interesting for us, because they can potentially change the way in which we conceptualize an entire authorship. Ehrman (2011, 24) gives three striking examples of text variants in Luke that obviously have been altered and mentions shortly the profound theological implications that the choice of one of them would have for the totality of our conceptualization of Luke’s theology.

Furthermore, local variations of texts developed gradually around large cities, since congregations close to big cities would get copies of the manuscripts (including all the characteristics mentioned earlier). Thus, it sometimes is possible to attribute a certain New Testament text to a certain geographical place due to distinct characteristics found in it (Ibid., xvii).

¹⁹ Metzger’s sentence: “...or after a gospel was written to meet the needs of a particular reading public”, has to be criticized on the basis that the extent of literacy must be presumed to have been quite small: “We now know that most people in the Greco-Roman world could not read, let alone write... Moreover, in this world even literary texts were oral phenomena: books were made to be read out loud, often in public, so that a person usually “read” a book by hearing it read by someone else” (Ehrman, 2011, 74 and 102). It seems more plausible to envision a scenario on the basis of Wayne Meeks’ descriptions of the early *ekklesia*: “The meeting place places of the Pauline groups, and probably of most other early Christian groups, were private homes” (Meeks, 2003, 75). In these settings, it is easy to imagine that the most likely more wealthy and thus educated and literate house owner (*paterfamilias*) could have read the gospels loud for the illiterate. Such a practice would neither have been alien to people with experiences from Jewish temples. Thus, Metzger’s sentence would be more accurate if “reading public” was substituted with “listening audience”.

Even though textual critics take all these criteria, rules, and all of the knowledge we have of the New Testament manuscripts and their development into consideration, the work to decide between different variants cannot be, as mentioned earlier, executed with mechanical or mathematical certainty. Preparing a complete Greek manuscript seems then to be a work of balancing probabilities and working towards the highest possible degree of certainty for one particular reading. Metzger describes it in this way: “In some cases the evidence will be found to be so evenly divided that it is extremely difficult to decide between two variant readings. In other instances, however, the critic can arrive at a decision based on more or less compelling reasons for preferring one reading and rejecting another” (Metzger, 1992, v). Thus, the committees that collectively work with the preparation of complete Greek New Testament manuscripts sometimes have to vote on which variant to include when the members favor different readings.

Hermeneutical Implications for the Textual Critic and His or Her Work

These short considerations of the character and the development of the texts, which we use as a base for our translation, have important hermeneutical significance. They help us to realize that the biblical texts we translate never have been static entities in fixed or predefined forms. They “live” and have, from their very beginning, constantly gone through changes – deliberately or not.

This is not only true for the variants and manuscripts we examine, but also for our translation of those. Here, the field of Translation Studies gives us valuable tools to discuss what they call “Retranslation” (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010, 294-298). This is a concept or a way of looking at translations that were made from the same source text into the same language. The strength of this perspective, not only if we apply it to our context of biblical translation but also in general, is that we after some more consideration understand that “source texts also change over time (due to authorial, editorial or printing technological interventions or for political reasons)” and that “the ‘same’ language is not a stable variable” (Ibid., 294)²⁰.

²⁰ Although we do not have the occasion to go deeper into this approach here, it must be noted that Koskinen and Paloposki point out that “the numerous retranslations of the Bible are seldom discussed at length in the overall context of retranslation” (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010, 295).

If we take yet another step back from the hermeneutical importance of the texts themselves, and consider e.g. the criteria for choosing a text variant or the concrete considerations of the textual scholar hermeneutically, we realize that the role and agency of the textual scholar in the preparation of our texts must also be paid attention to. It seems as if, just as with the role of the translator, we must understand that the textual scholar or critic does not work within a vacuum and that neither the criteria, nor the considerations of variants based on them, happen hermeneutically neutral. It seems crucial for us to comprehend that also the textual critic encounters the variants with some form of preconception or prior understanding, and that he or she will not be able to read these ancient fragments and manuscripts without interpreting them and understand their ‘meaning’ in light of what he or she already knows. Not to speak of all the other factors involved in shaping the way in which the textual scholar reads and understands.

If we then take a look at the standard literature within the field of textual criticism²¹ that has been referenced up to this point, it is striking that almost all of it stems from the first half of the 1990’s and is more than 20 years old. On the basis of our short previous hermeneutical reflections, it seems that a new consideration of the foundation of the field of textual criticism in the light of hermeneutics is necessary. This new perspective on textual criticism, just as the renewed focus within Translation Studies mentioned earlier, has to be imperative in its demand for focusing on and trying to explain the role and agency of the textual critic.

There is, nevertheless, evidence that there are scholars within the field of textual criticism that have seen the need and the necessity of a renewed approach to their field of study. Even if Eldon Jay Epp’s (2007, 275-308) approach does not start with questioning the hermeneutical implications of the work of the textual critic as we suggested, he launches his investigation of the basis of textual criticism at the very nucleus of its traditional self-understanding, namely with its objective and by questioning the concept behind the most central words used to describe this target. The approach Epp (2007, 275-308) presents in his

²¹ All of the works on textual criticism and the texts of the New Testament (except for Metzgers “*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*” (1971) used in this essay are suggested as further reading by Ehrman (2011, 28) in his book “*The New Testament. A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*”. Their authors are among the central names within this field of study. Also Epp (2007), who will be discussed in detail later on, mainly references these works. Thus, it should be possible to call these works ‘standard literature’ within the field of textual criticism.

article “It’s All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism”, is fundamentally important for our work and has the potential of leading to a paradigm-shift within textual criticism. His criticism is so fundamentally important for a renewed understanding of the field and the hermeneutics involved in it, that we in the following are going to try to summarize his most central points – especially since they also will contribute to the general discussion in this chapter.

The Renewed Approach to Textual Criticism Initiated by Eldon Jay Epp²²

The starting point for Epp’s investigation is the simple question after goal of textual criticism. Many of the works we have used up to this point operate with the explicit – or at least the implicit – notion that the simple goal of textual criticism is to recover or restore the original text of the author.

The first line of the “Twelve basic rules for textual criticism” given by the Aland’s leave no doubt about the way they define the goal of textual criticism: “Only one reading can be original, however many variant readings there may be” (Aland and Aland, 1987, 275-277). Ehrman’s (2011, 20) account is not as explicit as the Aland’s, but his conceptualization nevertheless is apparent: “...the more manuscripts you have, the more likely it is that you can figure out what the authors originally said”. The maybe most explicit example can be found in Greenlee’s (1995, 1) definition of textual criticism: “Textual criticism is the study of copies of any written work of which the autograph (the original) is unknown, with the purpose of ascertaining the original text”²³. But also Bruce Metzger operates within this conceptualization of textual criticism’s goal: “...it has become possible to produce editions of the New Testament that approximate ever more closely to what is regarded as the wording of the original documents” (Metzger, 1971, xxiv). Epp thus claims, that when the main words and concepts this way of thinking builds on are examined, “the simply stated goal itself turns out to be inadequate” (275). Yet another consequence is that by these definitions, the variants themselves are either valued exclusively positive or exclusively negative. In other words:

²² The following examination is, when nothing else is stated or cited explicitly, based on Eldon Jay Epp’s article: “It’s All About Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism” (Epp, 2007, 275-308). References to this particular work will in this section consist of the concrete page only, e.g. (275).

²³ The quote is put in italics in Greenlee’s (1995, 1) book but has been removed here, since it would not serve any purpose in this context.

focusing on recovering the ‘original’ text has a strong implication for the way in which we see the role and content of variants.

Thus, Epp starts with illuminating the concepts of “The Original Text” and points out that up to the year 1998, when the Society of Biblical Literature hosted a seminar focusing on exactly this matter, the concept of ‘the original text’ and its defining role for the field and work of textual criticism, has not been subject to scholarly debate (279). Among the important outcomes of this consideration was the conclusion that “in some passages with multiple variants it is impossible to isolate a single “original” reading” (279). This then of course also influenced the way in which one had to view the value and character of text variants. They could not any longer be treated as either right or wrong. Under the light of the critical attitude towards the concept of the ‘original text’, variants now were realized to “vividly reveal ethical and theological concerns of the early churches” (279). The critique of two of the main building blocks of the traditional conceptualization of textual criticism (‘original’ and ‘variant’) necessarily leads to that other important building blocks of this conceptualization, such as ‘author’ and ‘text’, are being influenced and must be reconsidered as well. In Epp’s expounding of the latter terms, he clearly reflects his hermeneutical standpoint, which for the attentive reader of this essay will not sound too alien. He states:

In every reading of every text, it is difficult to be certain what the author intended, for each reader attributes to the text his or her own meaning that is created out of that reader’s whole-life context and experiences. Such a meaning/reading may be significantly different from that of another reader, and different also from the writer. At that point both the writer and the reader are ‘authors’, and this renders both ‘author’ and ‘text’ problematic (279).

This insight then again leads to a necessary alteration of our understanding of the term ‘original’ and ‘author’:

The breadth and depth of the situation disclosed by these questions and implications about ‘original text’ and ‘author,’ and hence the extent and complexity of the problems facing New Testament textual critics, are evident in the truism that each copying of a text, each scribal alteration to a manuscript, and each translation of a text produces a new ‘original’ (281)

Epp thus captures the very same core of hermeneutical considerations in connection to the agency and role of the textual critic as we have been discussing earlier on the subject of the translator's role. On this background, Epp sees it as an inevitability to reconsider and reformulate the objective of textual criticism. In the immediate continuation, Epp then precedes to considering in more detail the definitions of textual criticism, some of which we already mentioned earlier. He starts with Greenlee's definition (282-283) of textual criticism, but moves rather quickly on to a more detailed analysis and critique of the Alands' view (283-287), expressed in their book "The Text of The New Testament" (1987). Two important observations he makes in the cause of this criticism must be highlighted.

The first observation draws the classical objectives of textual criticism further into doubt. He states that even if one would substitute the aim of recovering the 'original' with the somewhat better objective of finding the 'earliest attainable text', "the result will surely be a text that, as a whole and in larger sections, never existed in any actual manuscript" (287), which in itself seems to be compromising for the vision of traditional textual criticism. He further points out that "[t]his realistic assessment of the transmission process makes the relationship between any presumed autographs and the earliest attainable text highly tentative and, indeed, largely obscure" (287). The second observation expresses maybe the most central critique against the Alands' view. It must also be seen as Epp's main objection against the traditional way of defining the goal of textual criticism. He states:

...it is evident that, in the final analysis, variants not selected for the critical text of the Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testaments (that is, are not part of the original text) have little further, independent worth. Rather, the utility of rejected variants lies in providing a trail that leads back to the original. So the focus falls entirely upon the establishment of the original text. (286)

What Epp thus tries to tell the reader is that variants *do not* lose their value, once another variant has been selected for the main text. On the contrary, he points to the more recently developed branch of textual criticism, called *narrative textual criticism*, that is able to reveal "that textual variants often have a story to tell – that narratives linger behind variant readings in a text" (288). In other words: Epp advocates an understanding of variants that value them without regard to whether they are adopted in the main text or not, because they can tell the scholar and the narrative textual critic much about the debates and issues that were on the

agenda in the times of the early churches (288). In a way, variants thus could – and maybe should – be seen and understood as the earliest and most concrete biblical commentaries on various issues we have. Also here, Translation Studies could contribute with some important perspectives, namely if we would understand the translation of the bible – and especially the work with the variants – as “Political translation”, which Chantal Gagnon (2010, 252) qualifies as a translation that “involves power or resistance” and when the texts that are translated “contain some form of power struggle”. Yet another insight of political translation speaks directly into the matters we are concerned with here: “in political and institutional context, translation is not often recognised as such, meaning that the translated texts are presented and read as originals” (Gagnon, 2010, 254). But also this, due to the focus of our work, is a thread that must be taken up and considered closely somewhere else.

If we thus follow Epp’s concern and wish of a restoration and rehabilitation of what text variants actually have to offer, we immediately understand that this impacts the way in which we understand the New Testament texts in general. In the previous section on the “Hermeneutical implications for the textual critic and her work”, our reflections on the development of biblical texts in a hermeneutical perspective led us to the insight that the texts we are working with are – and always have been – living texts, and that they never have been “static entities in fixed or predefined forms”. Epp reaches a similar conclusion through his interest in the value of text variants. He points to people in the scholarly milieu at the University of Chicago, “who emphasized that the New Testament textual tradition is a living text, that there are no spurious readings, but that all (meaningful) readings reflect church history – its doctrine and its life” (289). Yet another parallel can be drawn between our investigation and consideration of the translator’s role so far and Epp’s insights from the investigation of variants. He cites Werner Kelber, who describes the new understanding of variants as a “Copernican revolution” (292) within the field of textual criticism, as follows:

This early scribal tradition does not differentiate between primary and secondary texts. It is we the scholars who have drawn these qualitative differences in the interest of arriving at the original saying and the assumed original text. ... The early scribal

traditions... are constituted by the equiprimordiality²⁴ of their multiple authentic renditions (292).

This observation parallels our reflection on the role of the translator, which could be reformulated thus: it is we that have tried to keep the translator out of the equation in the interest of maintaining an illusion of a stable and static holy text, and that its allegedly universal truth is equally and neutrally transferable into any given language. There is yet a third dimension Epp picks from the scholar of English literature Jerome J. McGrann, which might give us a very important impulse for our further consideration of the translators' role. It concerns the question of what constitutes authoritativeness. Epp cites McGrann thusly:

The fully authoritative text is therefore always one which has been socially produced; as a result, the critical standard for what constitutes authoritativeness cannot rest with the author and his intentions alone (293, my italics).

If we try to apply this to the situation of the translator's agency, it immediately raises the question what it would mean for the conceptualization of the translator's role if it would incorporate such a socially aware definition of biblical text. This consideration must be addressed later. In concluding this section on the immensely informative investigations of variants and all the implications attached to this, we have to mention the simple but comprehensive objective of textual criticism Epp is able to formulate on the background of all the mentioned considerations: "to study the transmission of the text" (294). This definition embraces and gives room for both the search for the earliest attainable form of the text and the richness of information that lays in the variant readings (297).

This leaves us with the very important question:

What Have We Seen from the Considerations Undertaken in This Chapter?

Our investigation of how the source text, which we use as a basis for our translation, is prepared through the method of textual criticism has showed that there are cases in which the scholar's decision on text variants is extremely difficult. In such cases, the textual critic has to decide – based on his or her own chain of thought and with the help of general criteria –

²⁴ *Equiprimordial* means "existing together as equally fundamental" (equiprimordial, 2015)

which variant is the preferable one. We have also seen that the existence of divergent variant readings for a single text may have profound impact on the way in which we view and conceptualize e.g. general characteristic of an author's theology. Thus, some of the variant readings have the potential to put our entire understanding of e.g. Paul's letter to the Romans – or the understanding of Paul in general – at stake. This means that although the concrete verse we have chosen to translate in this essay does not have significant alternative text variants (Metzger (1971, 510) gives none), the work of the textual scholars preparing our source text is nevertheless vital for the translation of our single verse, because we – in the cause of the many considerations incorporated in our translation – will have to reference and grapple with the totality of the letter to the Romans, and probably even with the entirety of Paul's authorship – which is based on examinations of the text given to us by textual critics. Thus, textual criticism, the evaluation and selection of variants that will end up in our source text or baseline text, must be put under the same hermeneutical investigation and examination as the process of translation conducted by the translator. We thus saw that neither the textual scholar nor the criteria for textual criticism operate in a hermeneutically neutral space, and that the role of the textual critic is an important subject to focus on. Epp confirmed this finding. He showed that variants must be valued for the information about the early church they potentially can share and must not be 'forgotten' once they did not make it into our source text²⁵. What Epp pointed out was that the field of textual criticism needs a renewed basis, which includes the understanding of the agency and role of the textual critic. In the next chapter, we will attempt something similar for the way in which translation and the role of the translator is conceptualized within biblical scholarship. In short: we will try to consider the premises for our own translation of Romans 4:13.

²⁵ A striking aspect of his account was that he asked some of the same questions as we did in our discussion of translation and the role of the translator. He also seemed to arrive at comparable answers.

3.3 How Do I Translate?

In this chapter, which probably will be most difficult one in terms of following a clear red line, we will try to concretize the theoretical basis for the translation that follows in the next chapter. Thus, will we have to consider in a somewhat broader manner what translation is and how we want to understand it in the context of this essay. When trying to conceptualize the act of translation, we naturally must deal with questions regarding different approaches and translation strategies, since they are interconnected with the question of what a translation is. We will also need to view these questions from a hermeneutical angle, trying to figure out a way of conceptualizing translation that bypasses or solves problems we have uncovered in earlier chapters. Altogether, we will try to form a more general understanding of translation and the role of the translator by drawing on resources provided to us by the field of Translation Studies.

It is important to underline that this is not an attempt to harmonize several branches of Translation Studies and merge them together into a sound system, which then is supposed to be the theoretical base for our translation. Rather, we try to focus on common aspects shared by the different Translation Studies branches, because we think many of the approaches nevertheless share a more silent but visible basic idea that enables them to communicate with each other. It will be interesting to see whether the field of biblical translation – or biblical scholarship in general – is capable of working with the impulses from Translation Studies, and, in a very concrete manner, how this theoretical basis will affect and influence the way in which we execute and think about the process of translation in the next chapter. Therefore, it will be important to take a self-critical position later on and see if and how our own way of translating interacts with, and is loyal to, our theoretical conceptualization of translation. This self-critical evaluation is of course not objective, which means that it is also the reader's task to take active part in the evaluation and to be critical of the judgments of our own work.

3.3.1 What Is a Translation?

This very basic question of what a translation is has of course a central position within Translation Studies, since the way in which it is answered lays the premises for what and how it is studied. It is not surprising that there are a number of different answers to this question. Munday (2010, 421) states: “it may be understood as a *process* of rendering a text from one language into another”. Such an approach to translation would most likely be interested in the relationship between source text and target text, source culture and target culture. As with all the others, the process-approach would have to explain how viewing translation as process influences the way in which the translator’s role is depicted, and whether there are considerable differences to other approaches, such as seeing translation as “a *product* (the translated text) or as a subject and phenomenon itself” (Ibid.). This approach would obviously be more concerned with the target text and target culture than the source text and source culture, even though it would be hard to solely study and describe the product without doing so in reference to its source. Translation Studies have in general had ‘integral translation’ – the “interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language” (Ibid., 422) – as its core-concern. Even if this categorization, invented by Roman Jakobson, describes translation as a process (Ibid., 421), it seems as if we should first consider the concept of translation in a more fundamental way, before deciding whether we conceptualize translation as a process or as a product – or as something else. Sandra Halverson’s concise and extremely sharp analysis verbalizes and addresses the core issue that also is at the bottom of the questions above, which instantly arose from the consideration of process contra product. Halverson (2010, 378) states:

Talking about a concept of translation in Translation Studies (henceforth Translation) means immediately butting up against fundamental issues concerning how one views the world and things in it, the feasibility or appropriate means of knowing anything about that world, the status of knowledge and of cultural, political, and academic practices and relationships, as well as the tension and conflict that accompany differences of opinion in any and all of these areas. Indeed, the very activity of engaging with the concept may be referred to as ‘defining’, ‘conceptualizing’, ‘discoursing’, or ‘theorizing’, among other things, depending on one’s stance.

This definition, strongly underlining the points we have made earlier on hermeneutical issues involved in both the discussion of the translator's role and the textual critic's role, has its absolute strength in the fact that it is able to show so clearly how the often seemingly purely scientific and theoretical discussion of the concept of translation in the end depends on beliefs and world views held by those involved in the discussion. Halverson furthermore points out that the multiplicity of these "beliefs" is mirrored by the development of the different approaches to answer this question. In the continuation, we will shortly take a look at how Halverson describes these developments in order to perhaps be able to point out a specific approach we would like to consider in more detail.

3.3.2 The Development of Different Approaches to the Concept of Translation – According to Halverson²⁶

Since Halverson's analysis is supposed to give a brief and more or less chronological overview over the development of different approaches to the concept of translation within Translation Studies, she adds an important reservation that is equally valid for the presentation in this essay: "Both the temporal divisions and the philosophical positions are somewhat oversimplified, glossing over distinctions and controversies which would otherwise be of interest" (378). But since this short survey's purpose is to help us to find an approach which we can focus on and which we can explore in more detail later on, we will have to allow these simplifications – without of course forgetting that they are exactly that: simplified descriptions of philosophical accounts.

Objectivist Approaches

Objectivist approaches are based on a conceptualization that describes the world as "independent of observers and real in and of itself" (378). This means that, according to this view, an observer will be able to describe objects in this world and their relationship to one another objectively. This approach advocates the view that only one single description of a

²⁶ The following subchapter (3.3.2.) is, when nothing else is stated or cited explicitly, based on Sandra Halverson's article "Translation" (Halverson, 2010, 378-384). Also Halverson's disposition is adopted here, since it fits our own account. References to this particular work will, in this section, consist of the concrete page only, e.g. (379).

phenomenon or object can be true, and that ultimately a theory will be proven to be right or wrong (Ibid.), which implicitly denies an investigation of the scientist's role and his or her influence on the object of study. Thus, objectivist approaches clearly have some parallels to the way in which translation and the role of the translator historically have been conceptualized (see chapter "The translator's role in the process of translation), which of course does not establish any connection between the platonic ideas discussed earlier and objectivist conceptualizations of the world, although they can be used to produce theories with comparable outcomes.

Nevertheless, if an objectivist worldview were transferred to the field of translation, this would mean that, essentially, there is only one right translation of a text, which scholars can agree on objectively (Ibid.). In the beginning of Translation Studies, this was an important premise in the effort of establishing, or at least conceptualizing, the field of "Translation Studies as a *scientific* discipline" (Ibid.). This resulted in a perception where "Translation was viewed as the creation of a text which was equivalent (of equal value) to its source text" (378-379). Halverson points out that just a small number of modern-day scholars would support such an approach (378), but it is possible that there is a large – or at least a larger – number of *users* of e.g. biblical translations that hold such views implicitly. If this assumption were true, it would potentially add another explanatory layer to the examples of translation controversies, which were discussed in the chapter on "The impact of biblical translation on an individual level". However, "[o]ne important figure, Eugene Nida, developed the notions of *formal* and *dynamic equivalence*, which were intended to capture characteristics of form and meaning (in the first case) and communicative effect (the latter)" (379). In practical terms this meant that a translation, among other things, was supposed to pass on "the spirit and manner of the original" and that it was supposed to "producing a similar response" (Ibid). Especially the *dynamic equivalence* approach, understood as "a quality of translation in which the language of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that *the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors*" (Ciampa (2011, 141) quoting Nida and Tauber), understandably enough has been an approach to translation that has been strongly embraced by certain segments and parts of Christianity.

And there still are segments today where this concrete approach is strongly favored. An example for this is Ciampa's article on "Ideological Challenges for Bible Translators"

(2011,139-148) in the “International Journal of Frontier Missiology”, where *dynamic equivalence* is seen as being “the best approach in many instances”²⁷. This approach allows religious motivated translators and the recipients of the translation product to hold on to the idea that God speaks directly to them through the Bible, and affirms in this way the very real and physical notion of status and power of the holy text, which these religious traditions attribute to it. Remembering Halverson’s introductory analysis of the fact that discussing the concept of translation immediately entails “fundamental issues concerning how one views the world and things in it” (378), it is possible to presume that e.g. Ciampa or specific Christian traditions subscribe to the dynamic equivalence approach because it affirms, or at least does not challenge, the religious belief they hold.

Is this an approach that is advantageous and thus usable in our own translation later on? It does not seem so since there are several challenges that are in direct opposition to some of the very fundamental premises this essay builds on: First of all, an objectivist approach, and especially a dynamic equivalent approach, build on the assumption that everything is transferable from one language to another. We saw the negative challenges that such an understanding of translation can have earlier in this essay. Furthermore, such an approach would presumably also struggle to fully embrace a conceptualization of language that is not static, but allows the notion of both a developing and changing source language and target language. Nevertheless, the main challenges lays in the explicit goal of dynamic equivalence, which is to reproduce the original recipient’s response to the text in the target culture. This goal has several implicit problematic assumptions: First, in order to produce a similar response, one has to have the ability to access the response of the original recipient, which seems quite impossible not only due to the problematical hermeneutical side of this assumption, but also due to the sheer distance to this point in time. Second, this approach assumes that a modern-day person has the ability of accessing a distant and totally different culture, which is problematic of the same reasons as mentioned above. Third, as we have learned from Epp, in light of our knowledge of the many text variants, using the term ‘original’ in this context is rather questionable. The same variants would also be a challenge

²⁷ The entire quote reads: “I believe “dynamic equivalent” (and other more domestication) translations have distinct advantages and benefits and that they will be the best approach in many instances, but we should be aware of potential problems or harm to readers if they are not used wisely” (Ciampa, 2011, 142). So, although Ciampa is aware of some disadvantages of this approach – mainly focused on the potential danger of abuse (Ibid.) – he nevertheless holds this approach to be the best one.

in terms of reproducing the ‘original’ response (to which?). Thus, we have to consider other approaches to build our translation upon that might interact better with the basic premises in this essay.

Non-objectivist and Functionalist Approaches

The *non-objectivist approach*, developing during the 80s and 90s, is – like the name gives away – the opposite of the objectivist approach. The description of the world depends on the observer, which means that different descriptions can coexist without ruling each other out (379). This approach is also known as “constructivism” since it postulates that “in particular the social world exists only as we create, perceive and understand it” (Ibid.). It further incorporates a sensitivity towards power structures. Halverson summarizes it as follows: “Taken together, these ideas are associated with ‘postmodernism’ and are often referred to as ‘relativist’, since knowledge is considered relative to particular temporal, spatial, cultural configurations” (Ibid.).

One of the fractions developing from this new setting is the so-called *functionalist approach*. One of its most significant features is that it tries to describe translation in terms of its *function* in the target culture, and not any more in a binary manner with the relationship between source text and target text like equivalence-based approaches (380). Halverson cites Vermeer’s radical appearing definition based on these insights and the move away from binary source-target determined descriptions:

To translate means to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances (Ibid., my italics).

What does this (radically different) concept has to offer to our project? First of all, it seems that by basically saying “everything is target culture”, we are able to take many of our earlier hermeneutical reflections serious. Let us consider each element of Vermeer’s definition for itself. First, “to translate means to produce a text in a target setting...”: this statement takes the fact serious that we cannot free ourselves from the culture surrounding us and points to the inevitable fact that any given translation created by us, will be influenced fundamentally by the target setting. Thus, it implicitly acknowledges the translator’s indisputable agency while creating this text. It furthermore communicates, through saying that we “*produce* a

text”, that it is a *new* text that is created, and not that the source text is moved to another language and culture as in objectivist approaches²⁸. Second, “...for a target purpose...” emphasizes strongly the realm the translation is supposed to function within (which it is created *for*), and expresses also that it is the target culture that has needs, which are being met by the creation of the text. Third, “...and target addressees...”: points to the concrete recipients of the created text, who must be understood as being the source of the need that is being met by the translation. Thus, also the recipients influence the translation. Fourth and finally, “...in target circumstances” once more underlines that the space, which surrounds both the purpose and the addressees, is defined by target circumstances.

Even if the approach of defining translation solely out of the target culture seems somewhat odd at first, we have already encountered an example that practically applies such a conception: Epp’s (2007, 279) critique of the way in which ‘text’ and ‘author’ is being used in formulating the objective of textual criticism²⁹ shows that such a conceptualization gives us tools to uncover problematic simplifications in the theories we are using.³⁰

So, in order to conclude this section: we could say that the most important contribution of the target-oriented approach to our project, and its definitive strength, is that it *starts* by stating

²⁸ Arrojo (2010, 249) puts it thus: “every reproduction of a text into any other language or medium will not give us the integrity of the alleged original, but, rather, constitute a different text that carries the history and the circumstances of its (re)composition”.

²⁹ “In every reading of every text, it is difficult to be certain what the author intended, for each reader attributes to the text his or her own meaning that is created out of that reader’s whole-life context and experiences. Such a meaning/reading may be significantly different from that of another reader, and different also from the writer. At that point both the writer and the reader are “authors”, and this renders both “author” and “text” problematic” (Epp, 2007, 279).

³⁰ It has to be mentioned that, although we cannot go into further details here, the Translation Studies branch of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), as described by Alexandra Assis Rosa (2010, 94-104), also offers a target oriented approach, coming from an empirical point of view (Rosa, 2010, 98). This way of analyzing translation offers the possibility to empirically describe various norms that influence and determine the translation process (For a deeper consideration of these norms within DTS, see “Norms of translation” by Schäffner (2010, 235-244)). One of its strengths must be seen in the fact that it has managed to “produce[d] a series of rewarding insights into the functioning of translated literature within the literary and historical system of the target culture” (Wolf, 2010, 337). Although this is an interesting field of study, uncovering many considerable effects of translation, we choose to leave the investigation of its possible contributions to the field of biblical translation to another occasion.

the inevitable influence of the target culture and the translator's agency on translation. It thus seems as if we have come somewhat closer to a conceptualization of translation that fits this essay's focus and orientation. Nevertheless, we have to ask ourselves if this approach lacks something or if it has disadvantages we have not been able to uncover yet. Therefore, we shall take a look at further approaches.

Postmodernism and Culture Theoretical Approaches

More recent developments in Translation Studies and the conceptualization of translation build on many of the important insights from non-objectivist approaches, and they often share sensitivity for the role of culture in different ways (381).

Nevertheless, different fractions have evolved, giving impulses to the further discussion of the conceptualization of translation. The first of these approaches Halverson presents are currents within postmodern or cultural studies, which advance the view that "definitional attempts [are] pointless" because "such endeavors are also considered controlling and hegemonically motivated" (381). This way of thinking highlights the power that is involved in defining what translation is, what it contains and how it is ought to be understood. It further opens a real space for the coexistence of different contextual definitions of translation, hence taking seriously the absolute and determining primacy of the target culture. For our essay this would mean that – if a definition of translation is necessary at all – we should develop one that serves our context (target circumstances and settings) without claiming its transferability or its universality. If we consider the proceeding undertaken in this essay so far, we might say that we are in the process of contextualizing a working-conceptualization of translation that fits our needs (hypothesis). Still, the above shortly examined approach reminds us to be cautious with regards to conceptualizing translation for anything else than this essay.

The second current is associated with *culture theoretical approaches*. It is "less concerned with a particular Translation, and more concerned with the specific ways in which gender or power relationships, ideologies, political contexts or histories, or the potential for activism... can be played out in a translational area" (381). Put in the context of this essay, this culture theoretical approach could be materialized in self-critical reflections, considering whether how e.g. gender or ideologies have influenced the choices that have been made along the way

– not only in the concrete translation, but also in the cause of this entire essay. The third current, *critical realism*, is, as the name implies, a more empirically focused section (Ibid.). It is interesting that (even) they agree with the general postmodern approach on the most basic and fundamental statements, such as the postulate that “descriptive neutrality is just not feasible” (382). What we can take from this is that the postmodern approach and its conceptualization of translation, which puts all emphasis on the target culture, is what current scholarship widely agrees on. It is thus a solid theoretical foundation to proceed from. Having established this, it is natural to temporarily remain on this more elementary level and consider some of the above touched hermeneutical issues in an effort to understand more of the context we work within.

3.3.3 The Hermeneutics of Postmodernism. Is Everything Really Target Culture?

It is needless to say that translation and hermeneutics go hand in hand, because translating involves questions of comprehension – both in general and cross-cultural. Since we have established that a non-objectivist approach, and more concrete postmodern approaches, give us analyzing tools, language, and concepts to grapple constructively with the problems we have revealed in the beginning, we will continue our search (for this specific essay, and for the author’s worldview) for a fitting conceptualization of translation and take a look at Radegundis Stolze’s (2010, 141-146)³¹ article on “Hermeneutics and translation”. We will explore how her analysis of the hermeneutics involved in translation fits or challenges what we have found to be an advantageous approach above, namely our somewhat simplifying but nevertheless very practical work-slogan “everything is target culture”. This then hopefully helps us to concretize the basics of our conceptualization of translation.

Stolze starts by pointing out the above-mentioned fundamental relation between translation and hermeneutics (141). When Stolze further explains the statement that comprehension is

³¹ The following subchapter (3.3.3.) is, when nothing else is stated or cited explicitly, based on Radegundis Stolze’s article “Hermeneutics and translation” (Stolze, 2010, 141-146). References to this particular work will, in this subchapter, consist of the concrete page only, e.g. (142).

involved in translation, we find the first interesting nuance in her own conceptualization. She writes: “The translator expresses content understood from a source text and becomes a *co-author* for the target text” (italics added) (141). This simple qualifying statement launches us into an immensely important and interesting debate that we need to engage in briefly.

Who Is the Author of the Target Text?

From Vermeer’s definition of what translation is³², we took that ‘everything is target culture’. Thus, it was natural to think of the translation as a pure target culture phenomenon, with the target culture-based translator as the only author. This view seemed to be supported by Epp’s criticism of the terms “author” and “original” in textual criticism where he states: “each copying of a text, each scribal alteration to a manuscript, and each translation of a text produces a new “original” (Epp, 2007, 281). So, if we agree with Epp, and if we try to conceptualize translation (and thus the product of translation) in terms of target culture only (because this is the only thing we have access to) – the crucial question is whether this approach leaves any space for viewing the translator as a *co-author*, rather than *the* author.

In other words: does the ‘everything is target culture’ approach allow any kind of activity seeking to grant the source text influence on the target product? From this essay’s perspective, dealing with the translation of biblical texts, such an opening in our notion seems desirable, although we have to ask ourselves *why* this is desirable. One reason for the biblical scholar to admit the source text’s (and its author’s) influence on the target text would be to respect the existential status and value which it is given by religious users of these texts, and which is often connected to the presumed ‘author’s’ religious status.

Disregarding whether one accepts the premises for and the argument itself, we might have thought of ‘everything is target culture’ in a far too narrow manner. If we re-read both Epp’s statement and Vermeer’s definition, we realize that neither one *excludes* or discards a source text influence. On the contrary, the source text influence could be quite significant if we remember that its influence comes through the target culture-based translator’s comprehension of it. Thus, if the translator consciously chooses to make an effort to reflect e.g. source text syntax – this is: source text syntax as he or she understands and comprehends

³² “To translate means to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances.” (Halverson, 2010, 380)

it – in the target text, we could speak of the source text influence. Although a critic might object that this statement, and especially its qualifying apposition, really proves that even the source text in a way is a target culture phenomenon since it is accessed and understood from a target culture translator in target culture circumstances, we could nevertheless defend our position since it basically does not disagree with the critic. Thus, we allow a reflection and providing a language, which opens up for thinking and debating source text influence on the target product – even if its influence is ‘filtered’ and defined by the target culture (which includes the translator). This is an important nuance in this essay, since the translation of Romans 4:13 later on will try to reflect the source text “syntax and structure as accurate as possible”, keeping in mind that the author reflects in the target text what he or she comprehends from the source text.

Now one could ask why the accurate reflection of syntax and structure is important to us. One of the main reasons is the ideologically driven motivation mentioned in Chapter 2 “Why this essay?”³³. By reflecting syntax and structure as accurately as possible, a source text is created, which in many cases will sound somewhat odd compared to traditional translations due to lack of natural flow. The mere fact of untraditional wording and constellation has the potential to wake an ordinary end-user’s interest, which hopefully leads this individual to explore the reason for this unusual formulation, which again is supposed to lead to realizing the source text’s complexity and so on. A second reason for trying to reflect the source text syntax and structure in our translation is that fact that our concrete way of practical translation allows us to comment on the background for the choices made in creating the target text, which also serves the ideological motivation for this essay.

In concluding this short section we would like to nuance Stolze’s claim of the translator’s co-authorship and claim: The translator is *the* author of a translation (target text), which tries to mirror the source text as understood and interpreted by the translator. In the next section, we want to continue our focus on the author and ask how he or she can understand a text, whether this is possible at all, and if so, what the premises for such an understanding might be.

³³ “I seek, on the basis of a scientific approach, to prevent misuse and abuse of biblical texts as legitimization of patriarchal structures, uneven distribution of power, and suppression of minorities, by practically demonstrating the great complexity and richness of biblical manuscripts and their translation into modern languages.”

“How Do We Understand?” and the Hermeneutical Circle

Even if Stolze points out that “[h]ermeneutics as a modern language philosophy...tackles the question of ‘whether we can understand at all’”, and that “it does not explain ‘how we understand’, or ‘what we understand’” (141), we could argue that those questions are so tightly linked, that they can’t be discussed apart from each other. Further, I choose to presume as a premise for this essay that we have the capacity to understand (contextually³⁴), leaving the “how”, “what”, and “how much” to following considerations.

Since hermeneutics is an enormous field in itself, which we cannot possibly grasp in this essay, we have to select some concrete issues that are of importance to our further conceptualization of translation.

One of these issues concerns the (old) debate of how we can understand e.g. the meaning of a text. Schleiermacher tried to grasp this issue theoretically, developing analytical models like the “interpretive circle”, in order to ensure the interpretation’s outcome (142). Yet, he held on to the view that in understanding, “there is always an additional aspect of intuition, since understanding is an art” (Ibid.). This intuition must be informed by and build on knowledge. Stolze concludes: “This means that the translator has to be aware of his personal horizon of experience and knowledge and must open it phenomenologically by learning and entering into unfamiliar horizons, e.g. foreign cultures and scientific disciplines” (142). Applied to the study undertaken in this essay, we could say that we (the translator) try to *map* both personal horizon of experience and knowledge, while at the same time putting the task into a broader context, all in an effort to prepare the largest possible base for understanding the source text. And this is where the well-known “hermeneutical circle”³⁵ comes in to play, because,

³⁴ ‘Understanding contextually’ means, that we only can understand on the background of our own context - our target setting and circumstances. Our entire apparatus that can potentially be utilized to understand something is developed, rooted, and sustained by the context surrounding us.

³⁵ The “hermeneutical circle” is a central figure of description within hermeneutics. Various hermeneutical scholars have described and utilized its concept differently. In the early stages of hermeneutical analysis, it was used to describe the relationship between understanding a part of the text and understanding its entirety in light of each other. Later, scholars like Heidegger and Gadamer included the reader into the circle and used it to describe how the reader understands a text on the basis of his or her preconceptions, and how these preconceptions get widened by the reading of the text and so on, which led to the same circular motion of deepening understanding. For a description of its development with a particular focus on Heidegger and Gadamer, see Krogh’s book (Norwegian) “Hermeneutikk” (Krogh, 2009, 52-56).

disregarding its many different versions, it presumes that there must exist a connection between text and reader in the form of a common basis (143). Stolze puts it thus: “I will only understand something if I already know a part of it” (Ibid.). This then provokes the question of how the idea of the hermeneutical circle is compatible with the postmodern insights of that ‘everything is target culture’. Stolze answers:

There is the historical context in which the strange text was written, and there is the context in which the interpreter stands. It is impossible for the interpreter to eliminate his or her own context by means of a pure objectivism. Precisely by becoming aware of the modern context and its influence on the way one reads the text, one may come to a fresher, more accurate, and deeper understanding of the text (143).

The results of our preceding investigation of the translator’s role as the sole author conform to Stolze’s hermeneutical circle. Further, her version of the circle is exactly identical with the way in which we try to investigate this essay’s hypothesis. In our case, however, “becoming aware of the modern context and its influence on how one reads the text” (Ibid.) means that we first have to become aware of precisely these hermeneutical processes, before we can investigate other parts of our target culture that influence the way we understand. So, even if ‘everything is target culture’, Stolze’s hermeneutical circle allows us to take Vermeer’s definition serious, while at the same time giving us the possibility to talk of gaining and broadening our understanding of the source text.

There is yet another important conclusion to be drawn from Stolze’s description: “The truth of a text thus revealed is historically determined” (Ibid.). For our work and the entire realm of (religious) translation this means that we must not have an illusion or ambition of finding a ‘timeless truth’ in the verse we examine: it is *we*, the readers, users, and translators of these texts that construct their truth in the act of our engagement with them, which again reaffirms the need for examining the target culture circumstances from which we read them.

This has enormous implications for religious conceptualizations of ‘holy texts’ that not only is found within more conservative segments. It implies that the texts’ truth, and thus – for religious people and institutions – their holiness, is given to them by *their readers* and not by an outside source. Thus, ecclesiastical institutions are challenged to engage in a serious conversation and examination of the way in which these ‘holy texts’ and their *truth* are

conceptualized and used within their respective traditions. Further, they must invite their members to be part of this reflection.

Although this might be an unacceptable conceptualization of biblical texts in some Christian segments, it has an enormous potential of expressing a very positive anthropology in relation to God. Especially if it would be combined with a positive creation theology (*skapelsesteologi*), which Nordic countries are famous for, this challenge to rethink the construction of truth within texts could be a nurturing impulse.

Even though we think that the academic work with such texts operates within another paradigm when reading these texts, the question of the construction of their truth is nevertheless a motive that requests serious engagement also within the field of biblical scholarship. Maybe it is even harder to speak of truth within these contexts, since we all ‘know’ that truth is relative. Yet, the need for discussing this issue within biblical scholarship is very much present.

Taken together this means that we, translating a religious text, have to acknowledge both our own limitations of comprehending and the limitations of truth. Nevertheless, it gives us an entirely new background upon which to discuss concepts as “accuracy and faithfulness” of translation. Unfortunately, this is a task that must be executed in another context, and we will now briefly examine how Stolze transfers these insights and describes the action of the translator.

The Translator’s Task

Since we have already nuanced Stolze’s notion of the translator’s co-authorship, we will have to be especially observant with her definition of the translator’s task, which she formulates thus: “The translator will identify with the message understood in empathy, in order to re-express it as if it were his/her own opinion. Translation does not inform about a text, but presents that text in an intelligible way” (144). There are some elements in the first sentence that we need to address.

First, one could ask whether it is necessary for a translator to “identify with the message” in order to give a translation. If we interpret Stolze benevolently, this must be understood as a

reference to her hermeneutical circle, where the translator/ reader herself becomes part of the circle – what she calls “a common basis” (143). Yet, it is questionable whether a translator must identify with the source text message “in empathy” (144) in order to be able to re-express them. In Stolze’s argument, the use of “in empathy” is understandable, since she qualifies the re-expression of the understood message with “as if it were his/her own opinion” (Ibid.). What Stolze maybe tries to secure with this qualifying addition is the translator’s absolute commitment and willingness to re-express the understood message to the very best of his/her abilities. By anchoring this responsibility as subjectively as possible in the translator’s emotional facilities – “in empathy” – it appears as an absolute condition. So, even if we understand the intentions behind her description of the translator’s task and largely agree to them, we could question the concrete implementation and propose a reformulation:

In order to find the best possible formulation of the target text, the translator must try to understand the source text, its message and its premises³⁶ as broad as possible in order to be able to present what was understood in the best possible manner in the target text.

Second, there are also elements in Stolze’s second sentence that need to be addressed. As we have pointed out earlier, it is a specific target of our translation of Romans to also reflect syntax and structure of the source text with the specific target of giving the translation recipient information about the source text, which possibly effects the ‘intelligibility’ of the target text. Thus, this sentence is not applicable to the concrete context of our translation, which means that we already have an example of how the concrete objectives and execution of our translation can constructively critique hermeneutical discourses.

Nevertheless, what we can take away from Stolze’s description of the author’s task is that translation cannot happen without or outside the subjectivity of the translator. Yet, we need to be aware of not overemphasizing the subjective activity, since translating also includes fundamental technical and methodological abilities, which the translator must acquire. Thus, the translator’s role in translating a text is essential and, from the point we have reached now, non-negotiable.

³⁶ The translator’s effort of understanding the source text happens of course within the definition we have established earlier, which means that the translator’s understanding of the text is created within and on the background of target culture and circumstances.

Our own definition, based on all previous examinations and for the translation given in the context of this essay, thus could be the following:

*It is the translator that, on the background of his/her absolute and indissoluble affiliation with the target culture, tries to understand and thus constructs the meaning and content of the source text as nuanced and precise as possible in order to create a new target text for a target purpose that, in the most concise and exact manner, reflects the source text as experienced by the translator.*³⁷

This portrayal of the translator, especially with the “hermeneutical circle” in mind, leaves no doubt about the fact that the act of translation in our conceptualization must be described as a process³⁸.

3.3.4 Summary of the Choices Made in this Chapter

We started this chapter by asking the question of what a translation is, and saw that the answer depended on the specific approach, such as either seeing it as a process or as a product. In the later course of our considerations we saw that our own approach integrates portions of both views. We then moved on to a more fundamental analysis of the concept of translation, understanding from Halverson that this conceptualization depended on our general conception of the world. We further analyzed different historical approaches to see how they conceptualized translation on the basis of philosophies. Here we found that a non-

³⁷ This definition thus conforms to Arrojo’s (2010, 249) basic view: “Concepts and meanings are not discovered, but constructed, and because the circumstances of their construction are never the same, they can never be fully reproduced”.

³⁸ Yves Gambier’s (2010, 412-418) article on “Translation Strategies and tactics” presents different conceptualizations of translation strategies. The concept of strategies builds on the implied premises of the translation being a process. Gambier’s main focus in the article is the lack of a common terminology within Translation Studies to describe and debate translation strategies and tactics. To prove his point, he points to three different approaches that conceptualize strategies for translation in different ways and with different objectives. The important thing we learn from Gambier’s essay is that the description of translation-work as a process gives us important tools to deepen the analysis of concepts involved in translation. Nevertheless, this is a lead we cannot follow up in this essay.

objectivist approach, combined with influences of other sub-groups and our own critical understanding of those, would serve as a good base for further investigation. We thus analyzed Vermeer's definition that shifted the focus entirely to the target culture and simplified it with 'everything is target culture'. Further, we explored how this affected the way in which we could think of translation. Postmodernist approaches showed that we needed to define translation in a way that serves our task, without claiming its universality. The next subchapter on hermeneutics allowed us to consider and view critically some of our earlier won insights. In the consideration of the author-question of the target text, we were able to nuance our view on the relationship between source text, translator, and target text. This was also central in the next section's consideration of the "hermeneutical circle". We further saw how our developing view impacted religious views. In the last section, we discussed the translator's task, which finally led to the formulation of a definition for our essay that tried to incorporate all major decisions we have made along the way. These are the decisions and discussions that form the foundation, upon which we will try to construct our translation.

4 Chapter. A Commented and Detailed Translation of Romans 4:13.

4.1 Prelude to the Following Translation

The objective of the following translation is twofold. First, we would like to explore how our newly developed insights on the very fundament of translation play out in the creation of a new target text based on a biblical verse. Second, this translation is supposed to show how the concrete decisions and considerations of the translator impact the product of the work. We will see how the translation of a single word from a biblical manuscript potentially puts our understanding of the entire authorship of Paul at stake, which shows how we construct the meaning of and in the texts we encounter.

Before we can begin our engagement with the source text, certain elements need clarification.

4.1.1 Choice of Commentaries and Dictionaries

Commentaries undoubtedly help the translator in his or her quest of constructing the meaning of the source text. In this way, they will have a fundamental impact on how the translator perceives the source text, and thus finally on the target text. It must be noticed that the translation process was started and the dictionaries chosen before I had started to examine the premises of translation, including all the factors that influence the target text. Thus, the choice of commentaries was not a fully conscious one. Yet, exactly this could be advantageous for this case study, since it eventually gets us closer to translation processes that happen every day. Biblical scholars, especially when starting with the work on a source text, often consult many more commentaries than they end up using. Nevertheless, we must assume that they influence the translator's way of constructing the source text's meaning.

Hermeneia

The first commentary I chose was the Robert Jewett's (2007) modern commentary on the Romans in the Hermeneia-series. This is a critical and historical commentary-series, which I

have used in almost all of my earlier essays. The reason why I prefer this series is its incredible scope of information. Also, its strong focus on linguistics and detailed discussions of textual problems has made this an attractive commentary-series to use. This decision was made on the background of former good experience and an unconscious trust in the quality of the commentary-series rather than on any consideration of the author's person or background.

Karl Barth's "Der Römerbrief"

This commentary³⁹ was chosen due to its central status in the historical development of protestant theology (Hegstad, 2008, 74), although little consideration was given to Barth's specific theological positions that impacted his reading of the letter to the Romans⁴⁰. Other important factors were its publishing time almost 100 years ago, because I wanted to use commentaries from different periods. Furthermore, it is written in German, which also contributes to the diversity in commentaries used.

Ernst Käsemann's "An die Römer"

This commentary was chosen due to its publishing date (1980), its language (German), and due to its accessibility (I had it). I further knew that Käsemann had been influential, although I do not know the concrete nature and degree of his influence at the institution (Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo) where I have received my theological education⁴¹.

Jacob Jervell's "Gud og Hans Fiender"

This classic was chosen because it reflects an important part of Norwegian biblical scholarship. Not only is it written in Norwegian, but it also has a strong exegetical focus on Paul's line of thoughts, the letter's structure, and its main issues (Jervell, 1973, 7). Its style is

³⁹ Fifth reprint (1929) of the revised edition (1922) of his commentary that first was published in 1919

⁴⁰ Hegstad (2008, 74) states, that Barth's growing dissatisfaction with the theology and politics of liberal theology finally led to his radical separation from this tradition, which was expressed in the commentary on the letter to the Romans. For a concise analysis of Barth's life, work, impact, and production, see Hegstad (2008,73-85) (Norwegian).

⁴¹ Käsemann had a profound impact on the central Norwegian Theologian and professor of the New Testament at the Faculty of Theology Jacob Jervell (it is Jervell's personal copy of Käsemann's book that was used here) whose commentary also will be used later on. Jervell himself points to his teacher Käsemann in the introduction to his own commentary (Jervell, 1973, 7-8).

somewhat different compared to the other traditional commentaries, since Jervell does not give his own translation.

EKK: Ulrich Wilckens' "Der Brief an die Römer"

I chose this commentary because I had not heard of it before. Furthermore, it is an "Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament" – a commentary that obviously seeks to appeal to both Protestants and Catholics. When I chose it, I hoped that it would offer different perspectives than the other commentaries.

What do these choices reveal about my own conscious and subconscious approach to the source text? And how will these choices potentially influence the way in which I will construct the source text's meaning, and thus produce the new target text?

These commentaries have in common that they all reflect parts of the theological tradition in which I have been educated. This is affirmed by the mere fact that they are found in the faculty's own library. All of them are written by white, western men. One obvious factor might be that this specific demographic group has dominated biblical research, but I might have chosen these commentaries unconsciously because I belong to the same group. Thus, it becomes obvious that my choice of commentaries lack other perspectives on the text. Since we have established that 'everything is target culture' and that we on this basis construct meaning, we must be aware of the fact that my construction of the source text's meaning (in terms of commentaries used) lacks influence from female scholars, scholars with different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, classes, and worldviews.

Dictionaries Used

The choice of the three dictionaries is connected to three factors: First, I possess them; second, I am familiar with them; and third, they vary in the details they give⁴². Before beginning this work, I had not considered e.g. the dictionaries' age having a significant impact on the target text. Yet, since we have become aware of the fact that both target languages and source languages (in terms of that modern scholarship learns more about it) change, the target text will be influenced by the fact that not the most updated dictionaries

⁴² Newman's (1993) Greek-English dictionary is the most concise one, Preuschen's (1963) Greek-German dictionary is a little more elaborate, while Bauer's (1958) Greek-German dictionary is by far the most elaborate one.

were used. From the considerations above we saw that the target text not necessarily becomes ‘better’⁴³ by using the newest dictionary – the target text becomes different. Thus I chose not to substitute one of the dictionaries with a newer one, so that we hopefully can see how they impact our target text.

4.1.2 Choice of Translation Procedure

The way in which the translation is practically conducted below is a procedure I have developed during the introduction course to New Testament Greek, and it has since proven to be a fruitful approach in various translation situations. The basic idea is to give a translation (target text) on the basis of a source text and then explicitly explain in detail⁴⁴ why each particular word or phrase was chosen to become part of the target text as the best mirror for how I understand the source text. This is supposed to force the translator to “understand and thus constructs the meaning and content of the source text as nuanced and precise as possible”.

Another detail, specific to my own approach to translation is, the attempt to reflect the source text syntax and structure (the way I understand it) in the target text in order to raise awareness of the many considerations and choices going into the translation of a single verse. This is another example of how an ideological view leads to a concrete choice that influences the target text considerably.

Now, with some of the previous subconscious, or at least unexpressed, decisions and premises for the translation explicitly addressed, we will now proceed to look at the decisions

⁴³ Of course one could argue for preferably using the newest available dictionaries at any time in order to secure that the latest scientific insights impact the way in which we construct and understand the source text. This would also be supported by our previous given definition of translation that suggests that the translator should try “to understand and thus constructs the meaning and content of the source text as nuanced and precise as possible”. Nevertheless, on the basis of the third chapter, it would be interesting to suggest that older versions of dictionaries compared to newer ones should be treated in the same way as Epp argues for variant readings. Yet, this is a thread we cannot follow here.

⁴⁴ These detailed explanations of the translator’s choice are conducted within reasonable limitations.

made during the process of translation. This case study is supposed to show how mechanisms described in part III play out in practice, and how all of the translator's (and others') decisions impact the target text. Hopefully this will push biblical scholars to critically reflect on their own agency, including their entire worldview, when translating. Only then will they be able to pass on their insights to their readers.

4.2 Translation

“TiE”= My translation into English. This translation is intended to reflect GNT-T's (Novum Testamentum Graece⁴⁵) syntax and structure as accurate as possible. This may cause a lack of flow in the English translation.

Verse 13:

GNT-T: Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ, τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως.

TiE: *For(1) not through law(2) the promise(3) came to Abraham or(4) his offspring(5), to be the heir, that his be the world(6), but through righteousness of faith(7).*

⁴⁵ The electronic version (version 4.3) of the text is taken from the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland manuscript (prepared by Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung Münster/Westfalen, Barbara and Kurt Aland (editors). Copyright © 1993 by Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.), as presented by Accordance Bible Software (version 10.4.5).

4.3 Comments:

4.3.1 Conjunction γάρ

Bauer (1958, 300-302) gives four different general alternatives for the translation of the conjunction γάρ: 1) causative, 2) explanatory, 3) deductive, and 4) continuative⁴⁶. He categorizes the function of γάρ in Rom 4:13 solely as causative (Bauer, 1958, 301).

However, Jewett argues that γάρ shows that the following verses partly continue an argument made previously (Rom 3:27-31 and 1:16-17), while at the same time adding new notions to it and thus concretizes the argument further (Jewett, 2007, 324-325). Thus, in following Jewett's argument, our translation with "for" not only emphasizes the conjunction's causative dimension, but also its continuative meaning.

What Is at Stake?

The simple consideration of the character of γάρ forces the translator to decide how the structure and the entity to which the verse belongs. So, first of all, if we would have translated this conjunction only with the help of Newman (1993, 36) and Preuschen (1963, 48), we probably would have started our target text with the word "for" and continued to the next word. But because we also used Bauer's (1958) extensive dictionary that lists different functions of γάρ, we were influenced to consider whether the function of γάρ really is that singular as Newman and Preuschen suggested. Although we knew that our verse somehow must be part of a bigger structure and context, we now were forced to consider the very nature of this relationship in detail in order to be able to explain the content of our target text "for". Thus, we turned to Jewett (2007, 324-325) in order to find out how he constructed the content of γάρ. Here we found, that the understanding of γάρ in 4:13 has significant impact on how the rest of Paul's letter is understood. By linking it to what many believe to be the letter's thesis in 1:16-17 (Jewett, 2007, 135), Jewett naturally emphasizes the central position of 4:13 and following verses in his construction.

We see that the construction of a single term's content depends on how we perceive and thus construct the rest of the letter and *vice versa*. We are forced to decide whether we agree to Jewett's construction, which depends on arguing for a specific understanding of the entire

⁴⁶ These are my own translations of Bauers terms: 1) "begründend", 2) "erklärend", 3) "folgernd", und 4) "anknüpfend u. fortführend".

letter⁴⁷, or if we rather construct it's meaning differently. The latter would implicate that we would have to construct its meaning and content explicitly, arguing for why Jewett's construction in our perception is not the best construction.

In case of γὰρ, the target text would not *look* different depending on how we construct the content of it – it would most likely be constructed with “for” in any case. Yet, the reader or end-user of the product would not know that I already here had to decide on the core-thesis in Romans, which potentially could have a visible effect on a later target text. Furthermore, a translator that views him or herself as having no agency in rendering the source text in another language would have to argue strongly for that there only is one single and ultimately true way of how every particular detail of the letter to the Romans can be understood. The sheer amount of different commentaries with different perceptions (just consider the difference of perception in the few commentaries we will apply here later on), form a strong case against such a perception.

4.3.2 νόμου – “law”

νόμου is here translated with “law” without an article. Translations that include an article, such as Barth (1929, 108), Käsemann (1980, 111), and Wilckens (1978, 268) most likely wish to explicitly point to the Jewish Law by adding the article. Such a translation might be argued for if one assumes that Paul generally and throughout the entire letter solely is speaking of the concrete Jewish Law. One could defend such a reading if Paul's formula “Ιουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι” (first appearance in Rom 1:16) is understood as the defining dichotomy for the interpretation of the entire letter.

⁴⁷ By pointing back to 1:16-17, a pericope Jewett clearly identifies as “contain[ing] the the theme or thesis of Romans” (Jewett, 2007, 135), he states: “On rhetorical as well as thematic grounds, I contend that all of the material through 15:13 carries out this proposition [that the thesis covers the first fifteen chapters], and that the subsequent *peroratio* in 15:14-16:24 takes up its practical enactment” (Ibid.). This means, that Jewett is likely to construct the meaning of our verse – or any other verse in Romans – in light of 1:16-17. Thus, if we follow Jewett's construction and argumentation for it, we have to be aware of the fact that we *chose* to accept his construction.

Yet, the question has to be asked whether such a reading subconsciously is influenced by the traditional readings of the letter to the Galatians and historically dominant dichotomies between “the Jews” and “Gentiles”⁴⁸.

The term νόμος appears 30 times⁴⁹ before our pericope (Rom 4:13-18)⁵⁰ in Rom 1:1 - 3:31. In just a few of these cases it seems mandatory to translate νόμος in a manner that explicitly points to the Jewish Law. For the other cases it is possible to argue that Paul is possibly talking of “law” in more general terms or that he refers to “different” laws if we follow the logic that rabbi Taubes applies (cited by Brigitte Kahl): “...I am not qualified (it’s not so easy, I think) to sort out what Paul means when he says “law”. Does he mean the Torah, does he mean the law of the universe, does he mean natural law? It’s all of these in one” (Kahl, 2010, 9). Kahl herself extends this list further – at least with regards to the letter to the Galatians: “In starkest terms: What if Paul were targeting Greco-Roman imperial *nomos* much more than Jewish Torah?” (Kahl, 2010, 7). The point here is not to determine whether and to what extent νόμος in Romans 4:13 (but also in Romans in general) has to be translated with or without an article in all cases of its appearance and thus point to the concrete Jewish Law. Rather, this short discussion is supposed to sharpen our sensitivity towards the concepts behind concrete terms, such as νόμος. With Kahl’s remarks in mind, it should be possible to state that the construction of νόμος as the concrete Jewish Law might not be the key to Paul’s argument in 4:13 in the way we understand it, but rather δικαιοσύνης πίστεως (“righteousness of faith”). The target text formulation “For not through law...” thus highlights what could be read as Paul’s own emphasis on “righteousness

⁴⁸ In her book *Galatians Re-Imagined. Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (2010), Brigitte Kahl discusses the Roman Empire as the context that has been removed in the reading and interpretation of the letter to the Galatians, which has led to our traditional understanding of the concept of righteousness of faith: “Once Paul’s antithesis of grace-and-faith versus law/works righteousness was taken out of its concrete historical context and turned into a totalizing construct, justification by faith could be transformed into an abstract idea, a disembodied principle of ‘universal truth’ behind and above contingent reality. It could be applied in diverse situations yet always embedded in a structural dichotomy between Self and hostile Other” (Kahl, 2010, 12). Thus, the question at hand is whether the same dichotomies Kahl is talking about, which are evident in commentaries such as Matera (1992, 143) and Longenecker (1990, 151), also have had an influence on the understanding of the letter to the Romans.

⁴⁹ The search was conducted with Accordance Bible Software (version 10.4.5).

⁵⁰ If nothing else is stated explicitly, the term “pericope” shall henceforth refer to Rom 4:13-18.

of faith”, a nuance which easily is dimmed in translations that do not choose the same strategy as we did.

What Is at Stake?

The entire way in which we conceptualize Paul’s basic world-view is at stake when we try to understand such an enormous concept as νόμος. One of the major reasons is that we, from projects such as Kahl’s, understand that it is *we* that try to construct the meaning and content of a huge term such as “law”. We will of course do as best as we can in order to “*understand and thus constructs the meaning and content of the source text as nuanced and precise as possible*”, but we must not forget that this activity is executed “*on the background of [the translator’s] absolute and indissoluble affiliation with the target culture*”. If we then realize that we construct our image of Paul around central terms in his writings, such as νόμος, and that we ourselves also construct the content of these cornerstone-terms from within the target culture, it is hard to maintain an absolute certainty of ‘what Paul says’. Rather we should say that our target texts mirror ‘what we understood Paul’s writings expressed’.

Recent significant developments within biblical scholarship have gained sensitivity towards the fact that it is we that construct our own views of biblical authors. One of those, which commonly is referred to as “New perspectives on Paul”, must be mentioned briefly, although we cannot go into further detail.

These new approaches have in common that they realize the impact of events such as the reformation on the way in which we traditionally have imagined Paul, and especially Romans. While Paul e.g. in traditional conceptualizations has been pictured as defending ‘Christianity’ against Judaism, Paul is now being placed within Judaism, which of course has enormous impact on the general and traditional conception of Paul. In the Introduction to the brand new book with the telling title “Paul Within Judaism. Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle”, Mark D. Nanos (2015, 2) writes: “On a number of important issues, profound discontinuities arise between the Paul constructed⁵¹ in this new paradigm and the

⁵¹ Notice that Nanos speaks about the “constructed” Paul, reflecting some of the same insights we have gained through our fundamental analysis of translation. Thus, since this awareness apparently has made its way into some theoretical New Testament approaches, it is even more important to initiate the very same shift when it comes to translation in general.

theological traditions constructed around Paul in the past”⁵². This then clearly shows that also broader theoretical developments within biblical scholarship have the potential to profoundly influence our work of constructing target texts. In the case of the latter approach the implications might be so significant that we not possibly can engage with them justly here. But it must be pointed out clearly once more that such new constructions of the entire Paul might lead to that we in a future creation of a target text on the basis of Romans 4:13, will choose to translate νόμος *with* an article.

4.3.3 ἡ ἐπαγγελία – “the promise”

ἡ ἐπαγγελία, translated as “the promise”, seems to emerge as a key-term in the sentence on a meaning-content level. We could argue that one of the two central points in the verse is that “the promise” came to Abraham, because it is presented as a non-negotiable fact – only the way in which it came to Abraham seems to be discussed. Furthermore, we could argue that the central importance of “the promise” in this verse is even more highlighted because its concrete content is explained in the additional subordinate clause. The presence of the explanatory subordinate clause is in itself not startling if we assume that the reader or hearer of this verse was unfamiliar with the meaning-content of “promise” in a Jewish tradition – it is rather a logical consequence of the author’s awareness of the reader/hearers level of knowledge. Yet, if we assume a reader or hearer who is familiar with the Jewish tradition, we must also assume that he or she would have understood what was meant with “the promise”. In this case, the position of “the promise” is further elevated because the repeated explanation of a known concept normally underlines the importance of what is repeated. So, either way, “the promise” to Abraham obtains an important status in our verse. Most of the commentaries used up to this point agree that ἐπαγγελία not only is central to verse 13, but to the entire context of our verse, even if they interpret its role differently.

⁵² It must be noted that Nanos does not define this book as “a new developement either *within* the New Perspective paradigm or in reaction *against* it... Instead, this work represents a radically different approach to conceptualizing both Judaism and Paul” (Nanos, 2015, 2).

For Jewett, ἐπαγγελία is the very center of the pericope. In fact, he even bases his argument that the verses 13–25 make up a single pericope, on the centrality of this term⁵³.

Even if Wilckens (1978, 268) disagrees with Jewett on the concrete scope of the pericope (he does not use ἐπαγγελία as the determining factor in working out the scope!), he nevertheless agrees on the centrality of "the promise"⁵⁴. Käsemann (1980, 112) goes even further and emphasizes the central theological significance of ἐπαγγελία – not only for Paul, but also for the entire New Testament writings he has influenced.

Further, it is interesting that, although all of the mentioned commentaries create the target text by using "the promise"⁵⁵, each of the commentaries interprets and understands the term differently⁵⁶.

What Is at Stake?

Although our target text mirror for ἐπαγγελία – "the promise" – is the same as in all the commentaries we have used, we have seen that they conceptualize them differently. Again, the translator must decide which one of the encountered constructions expresses his or her own construction of the entire Paul best. This decision is difficult to reflect explicitly in a target text, especially if one chooses to mirror the source text structure and syntax as well,

⁵³ He states: "I would contend instead that the section of vv. 13-25 constitutes a single pericope that elaborates the theme of Abraham's promise, with vv. 14-15 arguing against the law as the key to the promise and vv. 16-22 arguing for faith as the key to the promise. The conclusion about Christ believers as the true recipients of Abraham's promise, the main contention of this pericope, is developed in vv. 23-25" (Jewett, 2007, 323).

⁵⁴ Wilckens (1978, 268) writes: "So wird ἐπαγγελία das beherrschende Thema, und zwar sowohl für diesen [verse 13-16] wie für den folgenden Abschnitt VV 17-22. Insofern gehören diese beiden Abschnitte thematisch zusammen."

⁵⁵ All the German commentaries use "die Verheißung" (Barth, 1929, 108; Käsemann 1980, 111; Wilckens, 1978, 268).

⁵⁶ Käsemann reads it eschatologically as a term that "bezeichnet die heilsgeschichtliche, nicht verrechenbare Kontinuität des göttlichen Wortes in seiner eschatologischen Ausrichtung" (Käsemann, 1980, 112), and sees the gospel (by pointing to Gal 3:8) as the eschatological materialization of the promise. Barth's interpretation coincides with Käsemann's in the sense that it also must be seen as an eschatological reading. At the same time, Barth (1929, 108-109) makes the connection to what he categorizes as the first of God's commandments, given to the humans directly after the creation, and thus he views the promise given in verse 13 as the renewal of the commandment to "[b]e fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, ..." (Gen 1:28, ESVS). Jewett (2007, 325-326) on the contrary, argues against Käsemann's and Barth's "spiritualization" of this term and, by pointing to 1 Cor 3:21-23, arguing for a very concrete conceptualization of "the promise" as something going on among Paul's addressees right now.

since we then try to not e.g. paraphrase source text terms in order to carve out nuances of our construction of the target text term.

Yet, what could be made visible (by e.g. spacing) in our target text if we were to translate the entire fourth chapter is Jewett's different⁵⁷ way of defining the pericope to which verse 13 belongs on the background of his construction of ἐπαγγελία. It once more becomes obvious that the way in which the translator understands and constructs the content of single source text terms becomes crucial for the way in which not only the complete authorship is conceptualized, but also how the text one works with is divided into meaning-entities. Although this is (in this case) impossible to express in the target text, those decisions of the translator could lead to a different target text wording (compared to other translations) in a later section.

There is a central conclusion we can draw from the observations we have made so far: We have to realize that because it is so difficult to reflect different conceptualizations and constructions of terms such as νόμος or ἐπαγγελία in target texts, the common view and conceptualization of the translator as having no agency in the preparation of the target text remains widely unchallenged through the translation-products themselves. Yet, some translators (or others) might think of this situation as beneficial, since it gives various users of the same target text the possibility of reading and understanding it completely different than the next person. In this way, Jewett (2007, 322) and Käsemann (1980, 111) can present target texts of verse 13 that do not differ from each other drastically, while at the same time constructing their content – and thus Paul – differently. This is yet another example that practically shows that we *do* construct our understanding of a text ourselves. Furthermore, this is why, at least to a large extent, the same version of the Bible could be read by conservative Christians and liberal Christians, understanding the identical target text differently. For religious institutions, this is an advantageous situation, since it prevents fragmentation or at least conflict on the basis of the usage of different target texts that each reflects another construction. Thus, it is also understandable that those institutions are not

⁵⁷ Apart from his own definition of the pericope, seeing v. 13-25 as a single entity, he names four different proposed ways of dividing this section based on different interpretations of its content (Jewett, 2008, 323). A fifth must be added through Jervell's (1973, 68 & 72-73) approach, treating the entire fourth chapter as an entity, and discussing the verses 13-15 together.

particularly interested in contributing to raising awareness of the translators' agency among common users.

4.3.4 The Particle *ē*

The particle *ē* is constructed in the target text with the conjunction “or”, like most dictionaries suggest (Bauer, 1958, 675-678, Newman, 1993, 80, Preuschen, 1963, 91). Also most of our commentaries choose “or”/”oder”⁵⁸ in their target texts. It is striking that especially more recent official translations of the Bible in English⁵⁹, German⁶⁰, and Norwegian⁶¹ choose to construct their target texts with “and”/”und”/”og”. These more recent translations could then be seen as the first clear evidence of the translators' agency in the creation of a new target text, since they unanimously choose to translate with “and”, rather than “or”. What these translations most likely wish to express is the way in which they have constructed their understanding of Paul's text pointing back to Old Testament texts. Even if all of our commentaries connect “the promise” to God's *covenant* with Abram in Genesis 15⁶², those modern Bible-translations most likely construct their understanding of God's covenant with Abram also in light of e.g. Genesis 17,⁶³. Thus, while the commentaries are

⁵⁸ Except for Wilckens (1978, 268) who uses the German term “beziehungsweise” which could be constructed with the English word “respectively”. Barth (1929,108) and Käsemann (1980, 111) construct their target texts with “oder”. Also Jewett (2007, 322) uses “or” in his translation.

⁵⁹ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version with Key Numbers (hereafter ESVS). The electronic version (version 3.4) of this text (Copyright © 2001, 2006, 2011 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers) is provided by Accordance Bible Software (version 10.4.5)

⁶⁰ Neues Leben. Die Bibel, 2. edition 2008, Holzgerlingen: Hänssler Verlag im SCM-Verlag GmbH & Co. KG.

⁶¹ Bibelen, 3. edition 2008 (2005) Oslo: Det Norske Bibelselskap.

⁶² Jewett (2007, 325) notices rightly that “[a]lthough Paul consistently employs this term in reference to God's 'promises granted to the patriarchs' (Rom 15:8; see also Rom 9:4, 8-9; Gal 3:14, 16, 18-29; 4:23, 28), the OT does not employ this term at all. It originates as a Greek term for announcing something, offering to do something, or claiming to have carried out what was announced, and develops as a technical term for divine promises within Hellenistic Jewish writings.”

⁶³ “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, wto be God to you and to your offspring after you.” (ESVS)

mostly interested in constructing and understanding the concrete content of Paul's ἐπαγγελία, those later Bible-translations seem to be more concerned with expressing their understanding of the scope of it⁶⁴.

What Is at Stake?

This is the first example of what we interpreted to be target text-evidence of translators' construction of concepts (which of course involves the construction of the over-all view of biblical history and how various events are connected to each other) that impacted the concrete target text. For these translators, their construction of ἐπαγγελία on the background of their reading of the Old Testament was so important that they chose to create a target text that differs from those given in the commentaries. Thus, in the seemingly 'easy' translation of ἢ, translators are forced to put their entire construction of the biblical narrative at stake, which evidently leads some translators to preparing a target text that conforms more with their conception of Paul's ἐπαγγελία than with the dictionaries' suggestion for mirroring the source text ἢ in the target text with "or". The end-users of these target texts are then either led to or assured in their construction of Paul's "promise" in light of Genesis 15 and 17.

This once more shows the importance of understanding our encounter with biblical texts and single words in terms of constructing them from within our target culture rather than presume that our construction of them is identical with Paul's own concepts – because also Paul is understood from within and on the basis of our target culture.

4.3.5 τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ – “his offspring”

The formulation τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ – “his offspring” stands at the center of discussions that concern Paul's theology. It is thus not surprising that most of our commentaries chose to

⁶⁴ It must be mentioned that Jervell (1973, 72) also seems to emphasize the question of who the recipients are: “For Paulus er hovedsaken *hvem* som er Abrahams barn og derfor har del i frelsen. ‘Arving til verden’ er det samme som å ha del i frelse” (my italics).

construct this source text-term differently in their target texts⁶⁵. Interestingly, the different target text-terms suggested by the various commentaries show varying emphasis on genealogical descent. In our target text, I have chosen to use “offspring”, because I interpret and understand this term in light of the qualification in verse 16:

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”.

Thus, our target text-term is supposed to capture the twofold decent from Abraham. But we also have to be aware of that the text of the ESVS might have influenced our choice subconsciously because it also uses the term “offspring” when describing *all* the recipients of the promise.

What Is at Stake?

The translator must once again decide which term fits into his or her construction of the meaning of the verse in a greater context (maybe even within Romans or Paul’s entire authorship) in order to find out how to construct the target text in a manner that represents his understanding of the source text best. In our case, we primarily chose to construct the meaning of the term on the basis of its closest context, although our decision partly was influenced by the way in which ESVS had constructed verse 16.

4.3.6 τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου – “to be the heir, that his be the world”

The translation of τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου I chose here differs from the target texts that are given in the commentaries. All of them⁶⁶ seem to merge this formula in different ways, creating target texts that read: “that he should inherit the world” (Jewett,

⁶⁵ Barth (1929, 108) uses “Stamme” (“stock”); Jervell (1973, 72) uses “arving” (“heir”); Jewett (2007, 322) uses “offspring”; Käsemann (1980, 111) and (Wilckens 1978, 268) use “Samen” (“seed”).

⁶⁶ Except Jervell who does not give his own translation.

2007, 322), “he should be the heir of the world”⁶⁷ (Barth, 1929, 108 and Wilckens, 1978, 268), or “he should be worldheir”⁶⁸. All of them seem to omit αὐτὸν in their construction, which lets them create a better flowing target text. Yet, I chose to construct our target text in a way that also reflects the source text structure and syntax, even if this creates more complicated target texts. Therefor the target text tries to incorporate αὐτὸν by constructing it through two subordinate clauses, each qualifying and nuancing the character and content of “the promise”: “to be the heir, that his be the world”. This twofold construction of τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου gives us then the possibility to even construct the content of the source text (or Paul) differently then the commentaries: our target text is able to point to what could be understood as Paul’s cue to the twofold content of the covenant in Genesis, the first part being concerned with land (Gen 15:18) alluding to “the world”, while the second part points to the “multitude of nations” (Gen 17:4) alluding to “the heir”. How such a construction and conception of verse 13 could be used in e.g. a debate on the affiliation of Paul’s addressees in Rome can not be discussed here, but is certainly an interesting thought that shows just how influential different constructions of target texts can be if applied to other questions.

What Is at Stake?

This example showed how the target text reflects my pre-translational choice of trying to mirror source text syntax and structure in the target text. This choice had a clear influence on how the concrete translation of verse 13 looked, proving that the way in which one chooses to precede when creating target texts – conscious or subconscious – has a profound impact on the result of the translation process. It is also worth noting that we here have an example where the commentaries did not directly influence our target text. Rather, our construction managed to highlight nuances in our perception of Paul that the commentaries’ target texts were not able to highlight. This shows that pre-translational choices also impact the way in which we perceive the source text and thus construct the target text, which is yet another reason for translators to highlight their own agency and think through the premises of their own translations.

⁶⁷ My own translation of Wilckens’ (1978, 268) formulation: “daß er Erbe der Welt sein sollte” and Barth’s (1929, 108) formulation: “der Erbe der Welt zu sein”. My translation of course removes the nuances between them. Yet, the main point is to show that both use the nouns “heir” (“Erbe”) and “world” (“Welt”) to construct their target text.

⁶⁸ My own translation of Käsemann’s (1980, 111) formulation which joins “heir” and “world” into one expression: “er sole Welterbe sein”.

4.3.7 ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως – “but through righteousness of faith”

The construction of the target text is technically not challenging, because there are few interpretative alternatives⁶⁹. Abraham’s “righteousness of faith” can be interpreted on the background of Genesis 15:6⁷⁰. Since this segment concludes the verse, initiated by the conjunction “but”, it naturally is highlighted as the most important point. Also, it forms the antithesis to Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου (“For not through law”) with which the verse was initiated (Jewett, 2007, 326). Naturally this leads to the contrasting juxtaposition of “law” against “righteousness of faith”, a dichotomy that has dominated and helped to form the self-understanding of Protestant Christianity. It has also been utilized in constructing the dominant picture of Paul contesting Judaism⁷¹. Yet, recent developments within New Testament scholarship, such as the already mentioned “Paul within Judaism”-approach, seriously challenge such traditional constructions of Paul (Nanos, 2015, 1-3).

What Is at Stake?

Not much is at stake in the mere creation of the target text. Yet, as we have seen, the concept of “righteousness of faith” has been and still is a defining entity in New Testament scholarship⁷² and of course within the protestant tradition. So, even if the creation of a target text is rather easy, the effect of the concept, when applied in its traditional interpretation on Paul’s entire authorship, has enormous impact on the entire understanding of Paul. Through the reformation’s identity-creating use of the “righteousness of faith” against what was called “the works of the law”, this concept further shaped the very tradition we are part of – our own target culture. Thus, by critically revisiting the construction of “righteousness of faith” through e.g. the “New Perspectives on Paul”, the very identity of Protestantism is put at stake.

⁶⁹ Käsemann (1980, 111) and Wilckens (1978, 268) both use the term “Glaubensgerechtigkeit” – “faithrighteousness”.

⁷⁰ “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

⁷¹ See Kahl (2010, 11-12). Although Kahl’s focus is on Galatians, her general observations concerning the dichotomy utilized by Luther have general value.

⁷² All our commentaries seem to subscribe to the traditional perception.

4.4 The Case Study's Result

By just looking at one single term, such as ἐπαγγελία, we saw that the ambition we formulated for the translator 'to understand and construct as precise as possible' is an endless task. Entire books could be written on one such concept, how to construct them properly in the target text or at least how they can be understood. We thus saw that the translator has to make a decision at some point. The engagement with these enormous concepts also showed that their concrete construction in the target text might not be different from those of other translators with other worldviews (and thus slightly different target cultures they operate from within). Yet, these diverging concepts might develop into diverging target text formulations at a later point.

Furthermore, the consideration of ἦ showed that we can trace translator-agency in modern translations of the Bible. We once again saw how important the individual translator's holistic construction and conception of biblical texts and figures is for the creation of a target text.

This case study then revealed that many of the issues we discussed in chapter 3 are detectable in the concrete translation of a single verse, how we are challenged on our conceptualization of translation, our world view, our construction and understanding of single terms, but also our construction of entire New Testament books and the very tradition we are a part of.

5 Conclusion

This essay started with the simple question of “What is at stake when a single biblical verse is translated?”. It developed into a quest that challenged the very understanding of translation, of textual criticism, of the way we understand, of the way in which we construct meaning, truth and thus how I construct my own worldview. Once it is realized that ‘everything is target culture’, anything else is put at stake. Epp showed that such a change of perspective could be very rewarding, letting us see details we have not been able to notice before and letting us criticize the fundamental concepts of the dominating paradigms – within academia and within an ecclesiastical realm.

The question thus remains what these insights lead to. What can be taken from the case study that demonstrated so clearly that we not only construct the source text, but really every aspect of it and more: entire concepts of history, storylines, and our very own culture? In other words: can this essay be a source of transformation? In order to answer this question, the initial motives for conducting this study must be revisited and the question above must be adapted to the motives.

So: how do the findings and conclusions drawn from this essay resonate within an ecclesiastical realm and within the institutions tied to it? As mentioned earlier, especially the challenge to the concept of truth could be seen as a threat within a religious sphere. Although we normally think that the interpretational hegemony of biblical texts by the leading religious institutions was removed during the reformations about 500 years ago, the contextuality of their meaning and thus their truth is nevertheless a challenge. Even though modern religious institutions do not have the same hegemonic powers as in earlier periods, they never the less could claim the truth of biblical texts within a certain target culture. Yet, our ‘everything is target culture’ statement is more radical than that, because it must be claimed by the individual and not by the institution. Thus, this essay’s findings, on the background of the consideration of the premises of translation, do not only challenge religious institutional power – they also call for a process *within* these institutions to positively redefine the value of the texts that are so central and essential for their members and for themselves. Theology develops when responding to challenges. I hope that the challenge posed here leads to a

positive response, realizing the immense positive potential the integration – or at least the open discussion – of our findings can have.

Also: how do the findings and conclusions drawn from this essay resonate within the field of biblical scholarship and especially New Testament studies? We have seen clearly that there is the need to address the construction and conceptualization of translation within biblical scholarship. I believe it is every biblical scholar's responsibility to respond to the findings in this essay by at least thinking through his or her basic conceptualization of translation and how he or she, consciously or subconsciously, passes on this understanding to his or her students. In an ideal world, the hermeneutical debate we have engaged in in this essay would lead to a renewed discussion among *all* scholars at a faculty. As we have seen, our insights inevitably question the very basis of our conceptions, which could result in gaining new perspectives on the respective fields scholars work with.

Again: the same question has to be posed once more – this time self-critically: how do the findings and conclusions drawn from this essay echo my own general understanding? Even if I controlled the focus and the concrete direction of this essay, I nevertheless was forced to (re-)consider my own understandings. One of the most important insights I draw from this work is Stolze's earlier mentioned simple yet radical point that resonates so well with the 'everything is target culture' statement:

The truth of a text thus revealed is historically determined (Stolze, 2010, 143).

For me, this simple sentence incorporates all of the most central conclusions. More than that, it also underlines that projects like the one conducted here, must be undertaken continually and by people within different target cultures. It also points back to myself and asks whether the contextual 'truth' uncovered in this essay is relevant beyond my own situation and target culture. It asks whether these insights of a white, western man are what a society historically dominated by white western men needs. I think that it may not be the particular conclusions I have drawn or the way in which I have constructed meaning here that necessarily resonates within other target cultures or individuals. Yet I hope that the fundamental *concept* of this essay, which is to question how we understand and conceptualize central paradigms within our target culture, is relevant also beyond my own context.

Nevertheless, this remains to be answered by the reader of this essay.

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